THE *GALE* OF OPPORTUNITY.

OR,

A SERMON Preached (at *Lidbury-North*) at the Funerall of the Worſhipfull *HUMPHREY WALCOT*, of *Walcot*, Eſq; *June* 8. 1650.

And now Publiſhed,

By THOMAS FROYSELL, Miniſter of the Goſpell at *Clun* in *Shropſhire*.

GAL. 6. 10. *As we have therefore opportunity, let us doe good unto all men, eſpecially to them that are of the Houſhold of Faith.*

HEB. 3. 13. *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſſe of ſin.*

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TO THE
Truly Vertuous and his much Honored, Miſtris *Anne Walcot*, of *Walcot*.

IT was your Husbands deſire (when alive) that I ſhould preach His Funerall, and 'tis yours, that I ſhould Print it; Elſe (for ought I know) it had never ſeen the light: For I count not any of my Grapes worth the Preſſe: Therefore ſince it is your pleaſure to ſee this Sermon in a Printed dreſſe, I pray accept of it.

When your dear Husband was alive, Ye were Two precious Diamonds ſet in the Ring of Marriage; God hath taken him away to

ſhine in another World, and hath left you to ſhine a while in this world; *It is but a while*, and therefore ſpread forth all your beams, before you ſet in the Weſt of Death, and be ſeene here no more.

If we would ſhine with God in Heaven, we muſt ſhine for God on Earth: Let this Sermon of opportunities make you improve your opportunities: Shall the men of this world hug their opportunities for the world, and ſhall not we Husband our opportunities for Heaven?

Society with *Jeſus Chriſt* even on this ſide Heaven, is a kinde of Heaven; and thoſe Chriſtall ſtreams of Joys which we might ſuck from God here, outed all the pleaſures and braveries of this world; which made *Bonaventure* (when the Devil tempting him, told him he was a reprobate, and therefore

therefore perſwaded him to drink in the preſent pleaſures of this life, for (ſaith he) Thou art excluded from the future joyes with God in Heaven) anſwer, No, not ſo, Satan, If I muſt not injoy God after this life, yet let me injoy him as much as I can in this life: Oh that drooping Soules would thus quench Satans ſuggeſtions! This were enough to rebound all his temptations back againe upon him. *Fruition of God afar off in this life (though we ſhould never injoy him in the next) is much better, then all the world below him:* Ah! What then will our fruition of him in Heaven be? Joy in him here, and you ſhall enjoy him hereafter: Live to him here, and you ſhall live with him hereafter: And to this end God gives you all your opportunities, to this high and happy end, that

Si Non dant frui Deo et virtute poſt hanc vitam, fruamur eoin præſenti.

you may attaine him. That himſelfe, and all that he is worth may be yours: And let me tel you, 1 That a Sermon of opportunities is almoſt as neceſſary to be preached, as to preach Chriſt himſelfe: becauſe the opportunity to receive Chriſt is (in its kind) as neceſſary as Chriſt to be received: as Chriſt is called *Salvation*; ſo our opportunity is called the *Day of Salvation: Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of Salvation.* We looſe Salvation it ſelfe, if we looſe the day of Salvation; we looſe Chriſt himſelfe, if we let paſſe the day of Chriſt, *If thou hadſt known, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.* A man that is to have a ſum of mony tendred him upon ſnch a day, muſt be ſure to watch and wait the day, if he would receive the mony: He that hath a ſute at Law muſt,

2 Cor. 6. 2. Luke 19. 42.

muſt obſerve the Terme-time; if he looſe the Terme he will looſe his ſuite: as *Luther* ſaid, that *Much of Religion conſiſts in Adverbs*: ſo ſay I, That much weight of our Salvation lyeth in circumſtances, in the circumſtance of time and opportunity: as the whole weight of our Salvation is laid upon Chriſt, ſo the whole weight of our getting Salvation is laid upon our time, our opportunity: a Let faith give you a preſentiality of things to come, of Death to come, of your Account to come: Faith gives them a preſent Exiſtence: ſet the Period of your Time neer unto you, behold it is at hand, when you ſhall live no longer, pray no longer, have the helpe of Ordinances no longer; We know not how few ſands are left in our Glaſſe of opportunity, and when they are once ſpent, God will not turn the Glaſſe again for

us: 'Tis this that affects the heart: 'Twas this that awaked *Niniveh* to repentance: *Yet forty dayes and Nineveh ſhall be deſtroyed*: How did this Alarum ſtirre their Hearts! what (ſay they) but forty dayes? Are our dayes ſhut up into ſo a narrow a room? What are forty dayes? How ſoon will they ſee an end? This frighted them into a fit of Repentance: It is time for us (ſay they) to faſt and pray, and riſe out of ſin, if our Sun be ſo neer ſetting: I am perſwaded if God had ſent *Jonah* with this meſſage, *Yet fortie years and Nineveh ſhall be deſtroyed*, it had made no work at all upon them: it might have amazed them, but not ſtarted them up to ſuch a preſent repentance: It is the neer approach of our end that drives the work home in us; Tell a Scorner in his ruffe and jollity, that he muſt dye one day; He receives it careleſly,

careleſly, and makes nothing of it: but tell him, yet forty dayes, and you muſt be called to judgement, Nay Sir, but two or three dayes hence, and dye you muſt; This goes to the quick, at this news the proud Ruffler is ſuddainly diſmounted, and his courage degraded, he looſes his blood in his checks, and ſhivers at the heart, like the leaves of the forreſt that are ſhaken with the wind; ah then ſee death upon us! Look upon our end as ſtanding by us; as neer as are the ſhadow and the ſubſtance, ſo neer are Life and Death; our life is but the ſhadow, death brings ſubſtance with it, ſubſtantiall woes, or woes, or ſubſtantial joyes in the boſome of it.

Cato Had oftentimes ſpoken in the Senate, that the City *Carthage* muſt be deſtroyed, being too neer a neighbour to the City of *Rome*:

For

For a long time together he formed no *Oration* in the Senate, but he uſhered in that ſtill as the concluſion: yet he could not carry it, becauſe *Scipio Naſica* being made up of a contrary opinion, alwayes pleaded on the other ſide, that it was for the good of the *Romane Common wealth* that *Carthage* ſhould ſtand: At laſt, *Cato* on a day brought a green Fig into the Senat among them, and told them, that this Fig was growing in *Carthage* but three dayes agoe: and thereby warned them that a Navy might within three dayes arrive from *Carthage*, and lay ſiege to their City: When they heard this, The neerneſs of the danger, made ſuch impreſſion on their thoughts that whereas before they could never be won upon to aſſent, now they voted not to give over till they level'd *Carthage* to the ground: And ſhall not eternity

affect

affect us? the neerneſſe of it write deep Characters of feare and care upon our hearts? Within three dayes, and death may lay ſiege to our City, to our Soul; beware of evill at hand, of death at hand, of Judgement at hand. Thou Fool (ſaith Chriſt) *This night thy ſoul ſhall be required of thee*: ah then let us Act betimes, let not the night take us in a night, let not the night of Death take us in a night of ſin and ſecurity, then we ſhall have a double night at once upon us.

3 Opportunities are very precious: Every one according to the objects they lay out for, value their opportunities: there's no Prince or great perſon in the world, hath more Clients, and attendants, then opportuniry hath: All ſorts Court her; and wait with humbleſt ſervice on her; The Husbandman waits opportunity to plow, and ſow, and reap; The

Tradeſ-

Tradesman attends opportunity to make his bargains at lowest rate, and sell off his wares at highest price; The Ambitious man stands at the door of opportunity to raise himselfe; All (but fools) according to their occasions run out to meet, and bow the knee to opportunity and shall not the *dearest* oppportunities be precious to us? shall we not take the *best* oportunity by the hand? Oportunity to gaine the most precious things is the most precious opportunity; oportunity to get the best treasures is the best oportunity; *Godlinesse is great gaine*, Heaven is the highest advancement, The Soul is the Crowne and Master piece of man: surely then the oportunity to get and save these should be counted precious oportunity; All things here (that are of the world) are but nothings, but Idols and shadows of the

1 Cor. 8. 4. *Tempus τοῦ αἰτοῦ εἰδωλον.*

the beſt things (*and an idol is nothing.*) Time is but the Idol of Eternity, and things Temporall, but the Idolls of things Eternall; Our eſtate and our dayes here are but an Idol; There's no divinity nor imortaliry in them; but God is an abſolute and eternall Being, the ſpring of all Divine ſatisfactions, They that live in him, live at an high rate, and live for ever; How can he complaine to want light, that lives in the midſt of the ſun? how can he complain of thirſt, out of *whoſe belly flow rivers of living water*? Surely then oportunity to injoy God, is the moſt precious oportunity. Your Importunity hath fetcht out this Sermon of Oportunity from me: and I have given you here more then I preacht, the time being too narrow to deliver all at once,

once, and therefore I was fain to omit many things in the Pulpit, which I had in my papers: The Spirit of the Lord Preach it all over againe to our hearts: I commend you to the Lord,

Who am
Yours most deeply obliged to Honour and Serve you,

THO. FROYSELL.

Clun, Octob. 8. 1651.

To his

Highly HONORED Mr *John Walcot* of *Walcot* Eſquire.

SIR, *In publiſhing this Sermon (Preached at your Fathers Funerall) I could not but publiſh your Name to it, or it to your Name, you being ſo neer to him, for* Every Child is the Father multiplied; *He loved you dearly, for his (and your own) ſake, I cannot but love and honour you highly.*

This Sermon was Preached for him, but it was Preached to you; and therefore God looks that it ſhould work upon you: For at that time you had two Preachers at once Preaching to you, the

the Preacher in the Coffin, and the Preacher in the Pulpit: He preacht to you that you muſt dye, This Sermon preach't to you how you muſt live: His Death preach't to you, that time will be gone; This Sermon Preacheth to you, how you ſhould improve your time: As death is the way to eternall life, ſo an holy life is the way to an happy death: *Your good Father dyed old, and you may dye young: as God writes ſome mens life in words at length, ſo ſometimes God is pleaſed to write in ſhort-hand cut a long life into a ſmall Monyſyllable: and therefore turne and winde your preſent ſtock of time to the beſt, and grow rich in grace upon it.*

Remember

1 *You cannot begin too ſoone to ſerve Jeſus Chriſt: One may begin too late, but he can never begin to ſoon to ſerve Jeſus Chriſt: Where ſhould the Flower of your Age grow but in the Garden of his ſervice? It is the Policy*

of

of the Devill to diſcourage Early holineſſe: He that goes out betimes in the morning, is more like to diſpatch his Journey, than he that lingers till the day be ſpent. Bp. Hall.

2 *You can never do too much for Jeſus Chriſt: Religion knows no* (a) *exceſſe: you cannot ſavour too much of holineſſe: as there be ſome perſons that cannot beare the ſmell of Muſk and ſweet preſnmes, it fils their brains aud makes them ſick, ſo Hypocrites, (and they are Hypocrites that) cannot abide the ſmell of holy preciſeneſſe, and the ſcent of ſtrictneſſe: Paul bids us be fervent in ſpirit (ζέοντες, that is, ſeething hot) ſerving the Lord:* Qui non zelat, non amat, *He that hath not zeale for Chriſt, hath not love to Chriſt:* True zeale is a Seal of our Election *: Strictneſſe and exactneſſe is the beauty and luſtre of Religion: I ſay, you cannot doe too much for Jeſus Chriſt, he hath done ſo much for us: And what doth Chriſt require*

(a) *Religion poteſt habere exceſſum ſecundam quantitatem abſolutam, poteſt tamen habere exceſſum ſecundum quantitatem proportionis, prout ſcilicet in cultu divino fit aliquid quod fieri non debet. Aquin.*

require of you, but he did the ſame for you? Is he not upon equall termes with you? Nay before hand with you? If he cals you to bear the Croſſe for him, did he not bear a greater Croſſe for you? Grace puts no limits to holineſſe: He that makes God his End, thinks he can never have enough of God, or be too holy for God: And though his actions of holineſſe, and his forwardneſſe in them over-run his Credit, or over-throw his Eſtate, yet he cares not, repents not; for 'tis not his End to preſerve himſelfe, but to ſerve Jeſus Chriſt upon himſelfe.

2 Cor. 9. 2. & 11. ad. 3. *Sus non poteſt ſervire roſas & amaranthum.* Rom. 12. 11. Franz & Plin Jucundi ſunt qui amant. Lucian. in dial. Mercu & Maij Finis appetitionis habet limites definitos. Ariſtot. Finis præſcribit mediis, ſed ipſi fini non præſcribitur.

3 Holineſſe is no upſtart: Under which notion the world looks upon it: as if preciſeneſſe in Religion were a new faſhion taken up, and put on by ſome but of late: No; Holineſſe was the firſt Suite that ever was put upon the back of mans nature: 'Tis more naturall to man to be righteous; Sin is againſt nature: 'Tis a defect of nature: It came (as I may ſay) of the wrong

ſide

ſide of the Hedge, a meer Baſtard: God is not the Parent of it, it hath nothing of God in it, 'twas the Devil that begat it upon mans nature, and therefore 'tis of a latter Edition then grace; Grace was, when ſin was not: Let us make man (*ſaith God*) in our Image, after our likeneſſe: *You ſee Grace is of a moſt ancient houſe, of the higheſt antiquity, and therefore if any thing will, it will ennoble you.* Eccl. 7. 20. Gen. 1. 26.

4 *And that you may be heated into zeale for Jeſus Chriſt, Live in the Scripture fire: as the Salamander (they ſay) lives in the fire, ſo do you live in the Scripture, as your Element: It will ſcorch you into an holy love to Jeſus Chriſt; No book becomes your hand like the Bible; It made* David *wiſer then his Teachers; 'Tis this Book that makes Preachers, and this Book is the beſt Preacher; This Booke will preach to you in your Chamber; By this Book all Preachers and Hearers muſt be judged at the laſt day; This Book will*

expound to you that hidden Book that is within you, your Conſcience, The Book of Conſcience is a ſecret and intricate piece, very few are well read in it, moſt deceived by it; but this Book of Scripture I ſay, this Book will diſcover it, and ſhew you all the Errata in it; it will ſearch your very heart, and tell all it's ſecrets to you, nay this Book will tell out Gods heart to you, and his minde concerning you, (cc) Luther *hated his own Books, and (ſaith he)* I often wiſh they were all loſt, fearing leaſt they ſhould hold Readers in delay, and take them off from reading Scripture.

(cc) *Ego odi libros meos, & ſæpe opto eos interire, quod metuone morentur lectores, & abducant a lectione ipſius Scripturæ, quæ ſola omnis ſapientiæ fons eſt,*

Jerome *gives a ſtrange narrative of himſelfe, how he was dragged to the Tribunall, becauſe he had read* Cicero *more greedily then he did the Scripture; Being asked of my condition, (ſaith he) I anſwered, I was a Chriſtian; Thou lyeſt (ſaith the* Judge) Ciceronianus es, non Chriſtianus *Thou art a Ciceronian, not a Chriſtian*

for

for where thy Treaſure is, there's thy heart alſo. *Preſently (ſaith he)* I was put to ſilence, and had not a word to ſay; *and among the ſtripes (for he had commanded me to be beaten; I was ſcorched more with the fire of Conſcience, conſidering with my ſelf that Verſe,* In the Grave who will give thee thanks? *Then I began to cry,* Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me; *This voice ſounded loud amidſt the ſcourgings; At laſt, they that ſtood by, caſting themſelves downe at the Preſidents knees, prayed him, that he would pardon my youth, and give place of repentance to my Error, Then he requiring puniſhment, if at any time I read heathen Books, I, who in ſuch a caſe would have promiſed you greater matters, began to ſwear deeply, ſaying, Lord if at any time I ſhould read thoſe ſecular Books, I have denyed thee; And ſo upon this Oath he was diſmiſſed; And he adds moreover,* Pſalm 6.

Neither was this aſleep or a vaine dreame, with which we are often deluded, Witneſſe that Tribunall before which I lay; Witneſſe that ſevere judgement which I trembled at, that I pray God I never fall again into ſuch examination by torment; I confeſſed, had my ſhoulders black and blew, and felt the blowes after my ſleep, and have ſince read Gods word with ſuch endeavour, as I never read before any human writing. Thus far *Saint* Jerome; *Now let this paſſage awake you, and all of us, Let us lay aſide the ſublimeſt curioſities of mans wit, all Volumnes for Scripture, And all imployments for heaven.*

Wing your haſte, you have the flouriſhing plumes of Age upon you, How farre might you fly and ſcoar up quite to an heaven of experience, and communion with Jeſus Chriſt,

Chriſt, if you would looſe no time, I ſay, if you would looſe no time, I hope you will not, I pray you may not, For you may ſee in this Sermon, That opportunity is an unvaluable Treaſure, and yet a tranſient Treaſure, it carrieth laſting things along with it, and yet it ſelfe laſts not, ſtayes not with us, You may ſee in this Sermon, what great things you may looſe your ſelfe if you looſe your opportunitie, you may looſe your ſelf if you looſe your oppertunitie.

God hath ſet you upon the higher ground, above many in the world, Act highly for him; Lay up a Rich ſtock of Grace within you; that you may have an heart to act for him in publick; I wiſh you proſperity here, felicity hereafter; Accept this Dedication

from him, who doth, and ſhall ever reſt,

Your real ſervant in
CHRIST JESUS.

THO. FROYSELL.

Clun, Octob.
8. 1651.

THE *GALE* OF OPPORTUNITY.

JOHN 11. 8.

For the Poore alwayes ye have with you, but me ye have not alwayes.

E-thinks I see a sad concourse of of people before me this day; and truly who can be here and not be sad? A great man and a good man is fallen this day, He lived amiable, and dyed desireable;

able; I am perſwaded, you could all finde in your hearts to wiſh him into life again, but that you are loath to diſpleaſe God; We muſt ſubmit and kiſſe the hand of providence in the death of our deareſt friends and Saints: We are now to performe our laſt office to him, we have brought him from his houſe to his houſe, I mean his grave, which muſt houſe him up till the great day of the Reſurrection.

Eccl. 12. 5.

You ſee what Death doth, it plucks up the tree by the roots, the *Cedar* as well as the *Shrub*: To day we are green, within a little while we are not ſeen: Stay but a few dayes, and ſuch a day as this will be thy day: And therefore that we may make a ſerious and ſpirituall uſe of this occaſion, turn your eye and caſt your thoughts upon the words of my Text.

For

For the poore ye have alwayes with you, but me ye have not alwayes.

Theſe words are the words of our Lord and Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*, and they are an Apolgy, or Defence which he makes for a poor Saint, who having done a good worke (an act of love to *Jeſus Chriſt*) was cenſured for it.

1 The work which was done, you ſhall ſee in the 3. verſ. *Then took Mary a pound of ointment, of Spikenard, very coſtly, and anointed the feet of Jeſus, And wiped his feet with her hair, and the Houſe was filled with the odour of the ointment.*

Obſerve:

1 *The dear Saints are full of love to* Jeſus Chriſt:

2 Love will ſpare no coſt: the Saints will ſpend the Spikenard of their credit, and the oyl of their life upon Jeſus Chriſt, where we dearly love Chriſt, nothing is too dear for him.

2 You

2 You ſhall finde this work of love eclipſed, and cenſured in the 4th verſ, *Then ſaith one of his Diſciples, Judas Iſcariot, Simons Son which ſhould betray him, Why was not this ſold for three hundred pence, and given to thee poore?*

Obſervation. There is no action ſo good, but ſome or other will be quarrelling with it, and find ſome fault in it: The beſt actions are capable of cenſure and diſallowance: The nobleſt actions may have a ſcarre of reproach and cenſure put upon them:

And this he ſaid (ſaith the 6. v.) *not that he cared for the poor, but becauſe he was a Thiefe, and had the bag and bare what was put therein.*

Obſerv. Avarice wants not beautifull pretences: Hypocrites carry foul ſins under a fair vail.

3 Now follows Chriſts Apology and defence of her, v. 7. *Then ſaid Jeſus Let her alone.*

Obſerv.

Obſerv. Jeſus Chriſt will take his Saints part and plead their cauſe againſt the wicked.

Nihil nocet calumniator, ſi te & tua opera probat Deus. Ferus.

The Lord Chriſt pleads and juſtifies her action by two arguments.

1 The one Argument, from the end of the action, *The honour of Jeſus Chriſt*, ver. 7. [*Againſt the day of my burying hath ſhe kept this*] That is, ye doe willingly allow ſweet balmes and rich prefumes for the dead: Now I am within a little of death; Behold this woman hath herein reached beyond your conceit, ſhe hath done this (as her laſt office) toward my buriall: I hope you will affoord me thoſe ſolemnities of honour which are given to others at their buriall; now, againſt the day of my Buriall hath ſhe kept this.

2 The other Argument of defence he takes from the opportunity of it; ſhe hath now an opportunity

Præſens pro futuro, ut infra. John 16. 10. Mat. 28. 20.

portunity to ſhew me kindneſſe, which within a little while will be taken from her [*For the poor always you have with you, but me ye have not always*] and therefore let her ſhew me kindneſſe while ſhe may: *Ye have not me always with you*: that is, ye ſhall not have me always with you: Indeed, *I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.* in reſpect of my divine preſence, *but me ye have not always with you,* in reſpect of my human preſence. Six dayes hence I dye, and goe to Heaven, I goe quite away from you, and you ſhall neither ſee me, nor have me again among you to perform any ſuch offices of reſpect to me, and therefore as for this action, ſhe doth well to take the opportunity, which will be taken from her. Obſerve, and 'tis the point I ſhall diſcourſe of at this time:

Doct.

Doct. *There is an opportunity for good, which if we neglect, we may never have the like againe.*

And therefore *Mark* rendreth it thus, *for you have the poore with you alwayes, and whensoever you will you may do them good,* [*i.e.* at any time] *but me* (saith Christ) *ye have not alwayes.* That is, you shall never want the opportunity of shewing kindnesse to the poor, for ye shall never want poor among you; the poor that want, you shall not want among you, they shall alwayes dwell among you, some poor or other as objects of your Charity: but you cannot alwayes performe service to me in my body, for you shall not have me alwayes in this visible forme and presence with you. And therefore be not angry with this woman, in that whilst I am present in body, she hath done this service to my body; The houre Marke 14. 7.

Luke 17. 22. houre is comming you ſhall wiſh to doe the like, but cannot; The opportunity will be gone, when I am gone, ye ſhall deſire to ſee one of the days of the Son of man, and ye ſhall not ſee it: And therefore I ſay,

There is an opportunity of good, which if we neglect we may never have the like againe.

Docemur hoc verbo, ut non ceſſemus bene operari, quandocunq; et quamdiu occaſionem habemus non enim ſemper id poterimus. Feru *in Loc.*

Time and opportunity differ: Time is the duration or ſucceſſion of hours: days, or years, opportunity is a concurrence of all other helps with time to crowne your deſires, and give birth to your deſignes, opportunity is a meeting of time and means together to effect the end, when time and the means are married and lodged together they beget opportunity.

What opportunity is,

As the Marriner that intends a voyage, Riggs his Ship, lyeth ready in the Haven, and waits the wind,

wind, his time is all the time he ſtayes there: His opportunity is when time, and tide, and wind, and all other accomadations meete together to ſend him away.

Occaſionem pars Temporis, habens in ſed alicujus idoneam faciens aut non faciens opportunitatem. Cicero. *lib.* 1. *juvent.*

If you would ſpeak with a man upon ſuch a day, your time is any hour in the day, but your opportunity, to ſpeak with him is, when he is at home, and can be at leiſure and will afford you his company: When all theſe claſpe together, that's your opportunity: So ſuppoſe thy buſineſs be to ſpeak with God, and ſeek him for grace or comfort, thy time to ſpeak with God is all thy life time, but thy opportunity to ſpeak with God is, when he is at home, and can be found; when he gives thee a heart to ſpeak to him, and hath a heart to ſpeak with thee, and therefore ſaith the Prophet, *Seek ye the Lord*

χρόνος *Tempus, ſpatium temporis in genere: καιρὸς vero opportunitas Rei gerendæ, quam* Terentius *articulum vocat.* Paſor. *in* χρόνος. Iſai. 55. 6.

while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is neer : when all theſe are twiſted together, that's the thread of thine opportunity.

Time without opportunity is like a body without the Soule, a dead thing and meer inanimate carkaſſe, and as the body is left without the Soul, ſo is time many times left without her opportunity.

καιρὸς ἄνευ χρόνου. So that time may ſtay, when opportunity is loſt : time may be preſent when opportunity is paſt: the tree of time may ſtand when the leaves of opportunity are dropt of: The ſtump of time may ſtick faſt in the root, when the branches of opportunity are cut down: the head of time may ſtand, when the golden haires of opportunity are fallen off: when opportunity is gone, the head of time is bal

And therefore I ſay, that there

is

is an opportunity for good, which if we neglect we may never have the like againe.

And this I wil ſhew you in two things:

1 There is an opportunity of receiving good, which if we neglect, we may never have the like againe.

2 There is an opportunity of doing good, which if we neglect, we may never have the like againe.

There is an opportunity to get, and an opportunity to act; an opportunity to lay up, and an opportunity to lay out ſpirituall treaſures, which if we neglect we may never have the like againe.

1 I ſay there is an opportunity of receiving good, which if we neglect, may be we ſhall never have the like againe.

1 Sometimes there is an op-

portunity to beget faith in us, which if we neglect we may never have the like again; as you may see in *Esai.* *And the Lord spak again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God, ask it either in the depth beneath, or in the height above: But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.* Ask a Signe, where thou wilt where thou thinkest it may be the greatest miracle, and give thee the greatest satisfaction, either in the depth, or in the height on earth, or in heaven.

Esai. 7. 10, 11, 12.

Ah what an opportunity had *Ahaz* here offered to inspire him with faith! A miracle where he would, and what he would; for the Prophet (a) prescribes not what signe *Ahaz* should ask, lest haply the truth of the miracle might be suspected; but leaves it to the Kings own option and free choice, whether he will have it towards the depth or height, in earth

(a) *Ratio signi autem (quod certe magnam enim) Regi Achas relinquitur libera. quam velit esse & habere, sive in supremis sive in infernis.* Sem. Boh in Isai

earth or heaven, if earth were too low for a miracle, to heigthen his faith, he ſhould have one as high as heaven.

Ah ſweet opportunity! ah ſtrong opportunity to work ſuch a faith in *Ahaz*, as to truſt God for ever; here was an opportunity for him to try God, to put the word of God to an experience; and ah! what ſcope had he? Ask *a Signe in earth or Heaven*, where thou wilt, and what thou wilt, I will not grudge it, any thing to mount thy faith beyond the Region of feare and doubting; to make thee and my people *Iſrael* beleeve in me, thy faith ſhall want for nothing to ſupport it; God gave him leave to be his owne Carver.

As when a great friend comes to your houſe, you entertain him in this Language, Sir, command all that's here, ask what you'l

have 'tis yours: So did God be ſpeak *Ahaz*, all that's in heaven or earth is, for this minute, at thy ſervice, the choiceſt miracle that heaven or earth can yeeld to banquet thy faith, command it, 'tis thine: what a rich table of opportunity did God ſpread for him? What variety of diſhes [a ſign from Heaven or earth] did the Lord ſet before him, to entertain and feaſt his faith? Thus doth God condeſcend to ſinners; when they wil not come up to him, he comes down to them: This was kindnes enough to ſtrike the fire of faith out of the hardeſt flint: Ah what an opportunity was here loſt and once loſt, 'twas loſt for ever: we read not that the like was ever offered *Ahaz* any more, but he grew worſe: when men deſpiſe Gods opportunities, they grow worſe & worſe. So again, you have another ſad inſtance in 2 *Kings*; where

where *Eliſha* prophecied in a time of ſcarcity, *Thus ſaith the Lord, to morrow about this time ſhall a meaſure of fine flowre be ſold for a Shekel, and two meaſures of barley for a ſhekel in the gate of Samaria; then a Lord on whoſe hand the King leaned, anſwered the man of God, and ſaid, Behold, If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? and he ſaid, Behold Thou ſhalt ſee it with thine eyes but ſhalt not eat thereof:* And ſee this verified. *And the King gave the Lord, on whoſe hand he leaned, the charge of the gate, and the people trod upon him in the gate, and he dyed as the man of God had ſaid.* He ſeeth the plenty for conviction of his unbelief, but he dyeth and taſtes it not as a puniſhment of his unbeliefe. 2 Kin. 7. 1, 2. Verſ. 17.

2 Sometimes an opportunity of repentance, and ſo of receiving pardon is given to a man which if he neglect, he may never have the like again: Such an opportunity

Judas had: *Judas* had conceived a plot in the womb of his intention to betray Jesus Christ, and form'd it up into a conspiracy with the *Pharisees* to deliver him to them yet Jesus Christ gives him an opportunity once more to repent and recall himself before it be too late; *Verily I say unto you, one of you shall betray me, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shal betray me. The Son of man goeth, as it is written, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed, it had been good for that man if he had not been borne.*

Mat. 26. 21. 24.

Ah *Judas*! What a thunder clap is here sent from heaven to awake thee? what a warning piece goeth off to scare thy soul out of sin? Twas a providence thou shouldst sit at table once more with Christ, to heare something fall from his lips that might melt thy heart; Ah, what an opportunity hadst thou

thou now put into thine hand, to repent, and retract thy purpoſe? for the Lord Jeſus doth diſcover his ſin, and doth diſſwade him from his ſin.

1 He doth diſcover the Sin,

But not the perſon yet.

I ſay, He doth diſcover the ſin [*one of you ſhall betray me*] the Lord Jeſus diſcovers the ſin that he might recover the ſinner, He ſhewed him his ſin, that he might not ſin, he ſhewed him his ſin before hand, that he might not ſin underhand: he did ſtrike the ſin that he might open a veine of confeſſion in *Judas*, and make him bleed kindly: Ah what an opportunity was here for *Judas* to confeſſe and be forgiven?

2 But he doth not diſcover the perſon yet: he doth not name him that he might not ſhame him; he opens the ſin but not the perſon,

ſon, that he might thaw him and not harden him: that he might winne him, but not irritate and provoke him: Jeſus is yet tender of his credit, how much more of his ſoul; what an heavenly dew of opportunity drops it ſelf upon *Judas* to moyſten his heart?

In like manner, what an opportunity haſt thou (O Sinner) to repent when God ſhall reprove thy ſecret Adulteries, and unjuſt dealings, and hypocriſie in a Sermon, and not diſcover yet?

He doth diſſwade him from his ſin by two arguments.

By Love and Terrour;

1. By Love, *He that dippeth his hand with me in the diſh, the ſame ſhall betray me:* which words were not ſpoken to diſcover *Judas* by this ſigne, but to aggravate his ſin, as if he ſhould ſay, my fellow commoner, one of my familiar friends, that eats of the ſame diſh with

with me ſhall betray me.

And here Chriſt endeavours to melt the heart of *Judas*, and cauſe him to forbeare, by an argument fetcht from all the kindneſſe and intimacy that had been ſo long between them: what, my friend? my familiar? who doth not only ſit at the ſame Table with me, but eat of the ſame diſh with me, will he betray me? will that hand that hath been with me in the ſame diſh, dip and dye it ſelfe into a Crimſon colour in my blood? he diſſwades him by love, by the law of love and friendſhip.

2 He diſſwades him by Terror: Mat 26. 24. *The Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed, it had been good for that man if he had not been born*: where obſerve,

1 The Lord Jeſus Chriſt bewayles not himſelf, but *Judas*, even whilſt he threatens *Judas*, he pities *Judas*:

Judas: *woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.*

2 He doth not yet unmask and diſcloſe *Judas*: he carries the perſon yet in the clouds, he doth not as yet ſay *indivíduo*, Woe to thee O *Judas*; but ſpeaks ſtill in the generall, *Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betraied*: the individual diſcovery of *Judas* comes in afterwards, and here Jeſus Chriſt does with this threatning waylay *Judas*, to make him retreat, (b) ſeeking his ſalvation, *It had been good for that man if he had not been born*: as if he had ſaid, if nothing elſe yet will, if nothing that hath been ſaid, yet can recall the Traytor from his purpoſe of ſinning, yet let this one thing beſpeak him, and turne his heart quite about, his own ſafetie, his own fearfull condition, which wil follow upon his ſin, let that put a ſtop to his progreſſe: *Woe unto that man*

(b) *Pœna prædicitur, quem pudor non vicerat eorr gant denunciata ſupplicia.* Hieronim *in cap.* 26. *Mat.*

man by whom the Son of man is betrayed, it had been good for that man if he had not been borne.

Here the door of opportunity ſtood open to *Judas*, and Jeſus Chriſt ſtood in the door to invite *Judas*, but he had not an heart to goe in, and the opportunity was preſently ſhut againſt him, and he never had the like again: he goes away, & becomes his own Executioner; *Judas* betrayes Chriſt, and after betraies himſelf, when Chriſt called him, he would not repent kindly, and now he meets with an unkind repentance that Swalows him up in the gulph of deſpaire.

3 A man may have an opportunity given him to ſave his life, and ſo by conſequent to ſave his ſoul, which if he neglects he may never have the like again. I wil give you two ſad inſtances, the one is *Lots* children in *Sodome*: *Then the men ſaid unto Lot, whom haſt thou yet here,* Gen. 19. 12, 13, 14.

here, either ſon in Law, or thy ſons or thy daughters, or whatſoever thou haſt in the City, bring it out of this place; for we will deſtroy this place, becauſe the cry of them is great before the Lord, and the Lord hath ſent us to deſtroy it.

The Saints are ſo neer to God, that he wil ſave thoſe that are neer to them, for their ſakes; God would be a friend to *Lots* friends, a father to his children. *And Lot went out and ſpake unto his ſons in law which married his Daughters, and ſaid, Up, get yee out of this place, for the Lord will deſtroy this City*: Behold here's their opportunity! an opportunity to ſave their lives from fire and brimſtone, and for ought I know, their ſoules from the fire of hell; O golden opportunity! for a mans life is his treaſure, an opportunity to ſave ones life is the life of all opportunities, and therefore poore *Lot* goeth to

them:

them, Grace doth not extinguiſh nature: he flyeth upon wings of love to them, and tels them, he warnes them like a Prophet, and beſpeaks them like a Father: but what ſay they? *he ſeemed as one that mocked to his ſons in Law*; and ſo he leaves them, for his time was ſhort, and now their opportunity is gone, and they are gone too: Farewell now, you are all dead men and women: God firſt raines down the golden drops of opportunity upon them to ſave their lives, which they neglect, and preſently he rains downe ſhowres of fire and brimſtone on them, and takes away their lives.

Another inſtance is *Ahab* in the firſt of the *Kings*, *Wilt thou goe with me to battel to Ramoth Gilead? and Jehoſhaphat ſaid to the King of Iſrael, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horſes as thy horſes, and Jehoſhaphat ſaid, unto the King of Iſrael*

1 Kings 22, 4, 5, 7, 8, 17. & 28.

Iſrael enquire I pray thee at the word of the Lord to day, And Jehoſhaphat ſaid, is there not here a Prophet of the Lord beſides, that we might enquire of him? And the King of Iſrael ſaid unto Jehoſhaphat, there is yet one man Michaiah the Son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord, but I hate him, for he doth not prophecie good concerning me, but evil: And Jehoſhaphat ſaid, let not the King ſay ſo. And he ſaid, I ſaw all Iſrael ſcattered upon the hills as ſheep that have not a ſheapheard, and the Lord ſaid theſe have no Maſter, let them returne every man to his houſe in peace: And Michaiah ſaid, if thou returne at all in peace, the Lord hath not ſpoken by me.

Here was his opportunity to ſave his life: but goe he will, his opportunity expires, and his life too, for he never returnes alive againe, *for a certain man drew a Bow at a venture, and ſmote the King of Iſrael*

Iſrael between the joynts of the har- Verſ. 34.
nes, wherefore he ſaid unto the driver of his Chariot, Turne thine hand and carry me out of the Hoſt, for I am wounded.

[A certain man drew a bow at a venture] the man ſhot the Arrow, but God aimed it: the man ſhot at a venture, but God leveld it at *Ahab*: the man ſhot at he knew not who, but *Ahab* in the whole Army was Gods marksman; *Carry me away ſaith Ahab out of the Hoſt for I am wounded:* Oh *Ahab*; What thinkeſt thou now of Gods opportunities! What ſaiſt thou now of *Micaiahs* words? *I am wounded*; ſaith *Ahab*, I beleeve thee, and the loſſe of thine opportunity wounds thee more: there's death wounds in thy Soul, as well as in thy body.

4 When an hypocrite will not obey Gods expreſſe command, he may loſe his heart, and his reſtrai-

ning grace for ever after; when a man loves a ſin better then Gods command, God leaves him to his ſin: When a man gives up himſelf to a luſt, God finds a time to give him up alſo, and ſets him a going faſter: he opens the ſluces, and puls down the bankes, that the mans luſt may run in a ful ſtream, and have nothing to checke it.

Sinner! God will one time or other try thee ſecretly, with a caſting command, a command that ſhall have the caſting voice, and there's thine opportunity to make or marr thy ſelfe for ever.

The Glaſſe of *Balaams* ſtory will ſhew you the face of this truth in it, when King *Balak* ſent for *Balaam* to curſe the people *Iſrael*, God denyes him leave to go, he ſets his command before him, *Thou ſhalt not go with them, thou ſhalt not curſe the people, for they are bleſſed* Here's *Balaams* opportunity: the com-

Num. 22. 12.

command is ſet before him to try him, and *Balaam* ſtands now upon the turning point, But what's the iſſue? When the Meſſengers came again, *Balaam* ſollicits God againe for leave to goe, *Balack* promiſes him tranſcendent and high rewards, and they ſeal a deep impreſſion upon the ſoft wax of his covetous heart, he is upon the wing to be gone, and what then? God now in judgment gives him leave to goe; *God came unto Balaam at night, and ſaid unto him, If the men come to call thee, riſe up and goe with them.* Verſ. 20.

But how can theſe ſtand together? in the 12 verſe *God ſaid unto Balaam, Thou ſhalt not goe with them*; But in the 20 Verſe, *If the men come to call thee, riſe up and goe with them*; Why did God bid him what before he did forbid him? At the firſt time, when he told him, *Thou ſhalt not goe with them*; God

ſhewed him the will of his approbation, but when at the ſecond time God ſaid to him, *Riſe up, and goe with them*, 'twas a command with indignation.

Some things God permits with indignation, not for that he gives leave to the act, but that he gives a man over to his ſin in the act, This ſufferance implyes not favour, but judgement: God never liked *Balaams* Journey, he diſpleaſedly gives way to it.

And now *Balaam* thine opportunity is loſt, and thou a loſt man: God will now give thee up to thine own heart; *Balaam* after this grows worſe and worſe; his heart is given up and hardned, 'tis ſteept in ſottiſhneſſe, for an Angel ſtops him with a drawn ſword in the way, yet he hath a minde to goe, his Aſſe doth by miracle ſpeak, and yet he hath a minde to goe, ah *Balaam*! where's thine

thine underſtanding? I ſee now thou art a gone man, for thine Aſſe is wiſer then his Rider, the Aſſe becomes rational, *Balaam* becomes brutiſh, when men repell Gods opportunities they become more brutiſh then the beaſts.

5 A man may by one ſhort act of ſin bring a long curſe upon himſelfe and his poſterity: As *Ham* when he ſaw his Father *Noah* drunk, and uncovered in his Tent, Ah what an opportunity loſt he now? had he veiled his fathers nakedneſſe, and thrown a cloud over it, he had received a bleſſing: but he goeth and proclaims it to his brethren, and they doe what he ſhould have done; they covered their Fathers nakedneſſe, and would not turn their eyes to ſee it. *And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger ſon had done unto him, and he ſaid, Curſed is Canaan, a ſervant* Gen. 9. 24, 25

of ſervants ſhall he be unto his brethren. Canaan was *Hams* ſon, *Noah* (c) as Gods mouth) prophecieth a curſe upon the ſon, for the fathers ſin; although ſome thinke (d) that *Canaan* firſt ſaw *Noah* naked, and deriding him alone, called his father to bear him company in that contempt; Here *Ham* is curſed in his ſon *Canaan*, and a curſe entailed not only to *Canaan*, but to his poſterity. *Noah* prophecies a long ſeries, and chaine of curſes upon *Canaan* and his children: he makes the curſe hereditary to the name and nation of the *Canaanites*, עבד עבדים *A ſervant of ſervants ſhall he be unto his brethren*, that is, the vileſt ſervant: for the *Hebrews* expreſſe the ſuperlative degree by ſuch a duplication, as [vanity of vanities] that is, moſt vaine, a [ſong of ſongs] a moſt excellent ſong: So here, *A ſervant of ſervants*, that is, the vileſt ſervant:

(c) *Nec enim tantum hominis verbum eſt, ſed Dei, imo plus & potius eſt prophetia quam ultionis aviditas* Ferus in loc.

(d) *Non dubito filium ejuſdem cum patre ingenii fuiſſe & ipſam quoque, ut patrem riſiſſe Noe,* Mercer.

vant: Ah heavy and prodigious curſe! for the Kernel and quinteſſence of this curſe was ſpirituall, whereby *Canaan* and his poſterity are ſealed up for ſlaves to ſin, and excommunicate from the Church of God: what a brave opportunity did *Ham* looſe here to get a large and long bleſſing on himſelf and his poſterity? and this opportunity he loſt for ever: for the decree is gone forth, [a ſervant of ſervants ſhalt thou be.]

Soule, thy not obeying God in ſuch a nick of time may looſe thee thou knoweſt not what: the doing or not doing of one act may undo thee for ever: See another inſtance in *Saul* [*And thou ſhalt goe down before me to Gilgal, and behold I will come down unto thee to offer burnt offerings, and to ſacrifice ſacrifices of peace-offerings, ſeaven dayes thou ſhalt tarry till I come to thee and ſhew thee what thou ſhalt doe.*] *And he* 1 Sam. 10. 8.

tarried ſeaven dayes according to the ſet time that Samuel had apointed, but Samuel came not to Gilgal, and the people were ſcattered from him, & Saul ſaid, bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace-offerings, and he offered the burnt offering; and it came to paſſe that as ſoon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold Samuel came, and Saul went out to meet him, that he might ſalute him: *Samuel* had bid *Saul* ſtay ſeven dayes in *Gilgal* till he came : ſix dayes he ſtayeth, and part of the ſeaventh, he had but a little part of a day to expect longer ; his impatience will not give him leave, for he offereth Sacrifice before *Samuel* comes, and he had no ſooner offered ſacrifice but *Samuel* came ; *As ſoon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold* Samuel *came, and tels him, thou haſt done fooliſhly, for now,* mark the word [now] *now would*

Verſe 10.

13.

the

the Lord have eſtabliſhed thy Kingdome upon Iſrael for ever: This one opportunity improved would have ſealed thee the Kingdome; one act of obedience now, would have given thee a laſting mercy: this minute of time would have got thee a Crown: ſcarce is *Saul* warme in his Kingdome when he hath even loſt it how neer may we be to a mercy and miſſe it? Couldſt thou not wait a little longer *Saul*? Thou waſt within an inch of a Kingdom, within a haires breadth of an eſtabliſhed fruition: *Saul* waited till the ſeaſon, and then brake off: He got nothing by all his ſix dayes waiting, becauſe he watcht not this ſeaſon: and the reaſon is, becauſe though obedience at all times pleaſe God, yet there is a punctuall and peculiar ſeaſon of obedience, wherein he bleſſeth: all the other acts of obedience are but preparatory, there

is

is a speciall nick and season of obedience, which crownes with blessing: perseverance is the only grace that crownes a Christian: *Methusalah* lived nine hundred ninety and nine years, if he had fallen away from grace at the nine hundred ninety and nine years end, all the good that he had done or got before had been quite forgotten: To obtain a blessing, its not enough to obey God, but we must obey him in that point and nick of time wherein he will give the blessing; as to meet with a friend in a place; its not enough to walk there often, you may walk there a week together, and not meet him, but you must walk there in that nick of time wherein he appoints you the meeting.

6 There is sometimes an opportunity given to receive some gift of the spirit, which if we neglect we shall never have the like again;

again: as you may ſee in *Eliſha*, when *Elijah* was to leave the world, and to ride in ſtate to heaven in his Coach or bright Chariot, ſaith he to *Eliſha*, *Ask what I ſhall do for thee before I be taken away from thee, and Eliſha ſaid, I pray thee let a double portion of thy ſpirit be upon me, ſaith Elijah thou haſt asked an hard thing; nevertheleſſe, if you ſee me when I am taken from thee, it ſhall be ſo unto thee; but if not, it ſhall not be ſo: And it came to paſſe as they ſtil went on, and talked, that behold there appeared a Chariot of fire, and horſes of fire, and Parted them both aſunder, and* Elijah *went up by a whirlewinde into heaven, and* Eliſha *ſaw it, &c.* 2 Kings 2. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Here was a tickliſh opportunity, a ſlippery opportunity; had *Eliſha* miſſed it, he had never had the like againe: So mayſt thou have ſome gales and ruſhings in of the ſpirit, to put thee on to duty, ſome

ſome breathings of the ſpirit to blow up thy cold heart into holy heats and deſires; ſome coruſcations and beams of the ſpirit to enlighten thee, ſome joggings and provokings to heavenly mindedneſſe, ſome ſtrengthnings of the ſpirit againſt a luſt proffered thee, which if you put off it may be thou wilt never have the like againe.

7 So when a man doth by providence injoy the ſociety and company of a godly man, that is, of a choice ſpirit; here he hath an opportunity to taſte fruit from him, which if he neglect, he may never have the like againe.

A man may by providence be caſt upon the company and fruition of ſuch a precious and fruitfull Chriſtian, ſuch an experienced Chriſtian, that he ſhall hardly meet with ſuch a one againe in all his dayes: Ah! now how ſhouldſt

ſhouldſt thou improve his graces whileſt thou haſt him? How ſhouldſt thou ſuck experiences from him? How ſoon he may be removed from thee, or thou from him, thou knoweſt not: providence that lends thee him and his graces for a while, may carry him from thee to another place; and then thou looſeſt thou knoweſt not what; Ah! how will the loſſe of ſuch an opportunity afterward damp the ſpirit!

Thus *Fælix*, whilſt *Paul* was in priſon, enjoyed a rich opportunity; he had a rich Jewel in the Casket of opportunity; Ah what an *improvement* might *Fælix* have made of *Paul* all that time? he had been happy *Fælix* then; Sometimes he ſent for *Paul* and heard him reaſon of righteouſneſſe, temperance and judgement to come but he might have had more of *Pauls* company if he would; he knew

knew not what a price he had in his hand whilſt he had *Paul* in his cuſtody; but he loſt his opportunity, for within two years he was removed, and never enjoyed ſuch an opportunity again. And thus I have done with the firſt part.

Secondly, There are Opportunities of doing good, which if we neglect we may never have the like again.

1. When you are travelling, and fall in upon the way with a man you never ſaw before, and a thouſand to one never ſhall ſee again; here's an opportunity for thee to doe his ſoul good, to drop heaven into his ſoul; which ſeaſon thou maiſt never have again to ſeaſon him with a word of grace: Thus *Philip* falling in with the *Eunuch* whilſt he was riding on his way homeward from *Jeruſalem*, cloſed with him, and preached

ched Christ unto him, and was an instrument to save the soule of him whom he never saw before, nor ever after saw again. Acts 8. 35, 37.

2. When thou art in an office for a time, it may be but one year, thou art cloathed with authority and opportunity to doe good, which thou maist never have again. Time will strip thee of thy robes of Authority; thou maist lay down thy life before thou laist down thy Office; if not, yet annuall Offices expire, and fall off of themselves, and when thine authority is gone, thy opportunity is gone: as a man that hath a sword or a staffe in his hand, if his staffe be wrencht out of his hand, he hath lost his opportunity to foile his enemy; so it is when the staffe of authority is passed out of thy hand unto another, thy time is gone.

Felix whilst he was in Office, was

ſome breathings of the ſpirit to blow up thy cold heart into holy heats and deſires; ſome coruſcations and beams of the ſpirit to enlighten thee, ſome joggings and provokings to heavenly mindedneſſe, ſome ſtrengthnings of the ſpirit againſt a luſt proffered thee, which if you put off it may be thou wilt never have the like againe.

7 So when a man doth by providence injoy the ſociety and company of a godly man, that is, of a choice ſpirit; here he hath an opportunity to taſte fruit from him, which if he neglect, he may never have the like againe.

A man may by providence be caſt upon the company and fruition of ſuch a precious and fruitfull Chriſtian, ſuch an experienced Chriſtian, that he ſhall hardly meet with ſuch a one againe in all his dayes: Ah! now how ſhouldſt

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Felix whilst he was in Office,

was

was married unto a gallant opportunity to releaſe *Paul* out of Priſon, but he did not husband
Act. 24. 27. the opportunity, and he was divorced from it for ever, for ſaith the Text, after two years *Portius Feſtus* came into *Fælix* room, and *Fælix* willing to ſhew the Jewes a pleaſure left *Paul* bound.

3 So when a man is dying, upon his death-bed, there you have an opportunity to doe his ſoul good, which you ſhall never have again: Thus Chriſt dropt in grace and good counſell into the thiefe upon the Croſſe, the Croſſe was his death-bed, which had it Been omitted, the thiefs ſoul had been loſt within a few howres for ever, and the opportunity gone too.

4 So when a friend is in affliction, then thou haſt an opportunity to ſtrike whilſt the iron is hot, to humble him while he is humbled;

to

to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him while his heart is ſeaſoning and melting: as the Jewes and thoſe eaſterne people doe plough and ſow their ground when the former raine hath ſoftned it, Ah! Sow then (for now is the opportunity) I ſay, ſow the ſeed of inſtruction upon a ſinners heart, while the former or latter raine of affliction fals upon him, it is a ſoftning time, a melting time; while the raine drops, the earth is ſoft: He that made a ſcorne of godlineſſe before, will then be of another minde, and hear counſell then if ever he will hear it.

5 So when a godly man is by providence caſt into a family, he hath an opportunity to diſtill ſhowres and drop divine influences, whilſt (like a ſtar) he is fixed there, which if he omits, he may never have the like againe: thus *Paul* being in the Jaylors family

preacht the Goſpel to him, and to his houſhold, and he believed in God (ſaith the Text) with all his houſhold.

Act. 16. 34.

6 So when a Miniſter hath intereſt in the hearts of a people, let him improve it, and look to it, for he knows not how ſoon the tide may turn, and he never have the like opportunity againe.

2 Tim 4. 2,3.

7 Rich men, You that are in proſperity and have your ſayles fil'd with gales of wealth, you have opportunities to honor God which others have not, and which if you neglect you may ſuddenly never have the like againe.

1 You have wherewith to maintain and encourage the Goſpel, to give to the Saints; and truly it is the higheſt advance of riches, to make riches an inſtrument to advance religion Oh then honour God with thy ſubſtance, lay out for God and his Goſpel,

leaſt

leaſt the Lord, thou knoweſt not how ſoon, ſend a North-wind to blow upon thee, and freez up thy wealth, and then thou maiſt never have the like tide of opportunity againe. 2 Beſides, you have greater opportunities for hearing the word, and praying in your ſecret cloſets, then poor men have, who live upon the ſwet of their brows: you may be praying when the poor muſt be labouring for their living you may be meditating, whilſt they muſt be getting their bread.

If then you, rich ones, ſee poor men that are neceſſita ted to work hard for a meane living, more lively, more frequent and abundant in duties then your ſelves are, know now you walke not by rule where much is given, much is required; and to whom God hath given much, of them he asks the more who are happier, then that are in the Kitchin, or they

that attend upon the Prince?

Ah, you rich and great persons! this is a high favour and transcendent honour, that God hath freed you from inferiour drudgery, to imploy you in more noble services in the Court, while others must serve their occasions; you that have fulnesse of the world, you have fulnesse of time to injoy the Kings presence, and wait upon Christs person in holy duties, and therefore know that you should be more with God then others: Holinesse is your trade, and your closets are your shops, and every day is a Sabbath day to you: Take your opportunities: that may be enough for one which is too little for another; where God gives much opportunities, they must do much for God.

8 A man may have an opportunity to suffer for Christ, which if he negelct he may never have the

the like again: To ſuffer for Chriſt is honorable, God will not put this honour upon every one, he puts this honour upon his veſſels of honor: he gives grace to a man, and caſts him into a veſſel of ſilver or gold, and then throws him into the fire to melt, and ſuffer for his name: The mettal of that Chriſtian muſt be ſilver or gold that can ſuffer for Chriſt: a veſſel of wood, throw him into the fire, his hoops will fly off, he will breake aſſunder, & never hold out. The three children that were caſt into the fiery furnace, what glorious mould and mettal were they made of? Had they not taken the oportunity to ſuffer for God, they might never have met with ſuch a one againe.

1 For what a ſpreading fame and glory of God did their ſufferings ſcatter over all the world? God is acknowledged and adored by *Nebuchadnezzar*, a Decree is

made that every People, Nation, and Language which speak amiss against the God of *Shadrach*, *Meshach* and *Abednego*, shall be cut in
Dan. 3. 28, 29. pieces: *Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, blessed be the God of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego, who hath sent his Angel and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the Kings word, and yeelded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any God, except their own God. Therefore I make a Decree that every People, Nation or Language, which speak any thing amisse against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort:* Here Gods glory shines out of their sufferings, even enemies acknowledge none like *Israels* God.

Here they found a most glorious

ous opportunity to honour God, which if they had loſt, they might never have had the like againe; had they loſt this oportunity God had loſt his glory.

2 To honour themſelves: for

1 They were no ſooner in the fire, but they met with Jeſus Chriſt there: *Then Nebuchadnezzar the King was aſtonied, and roſe up in haſte, and ſpake and ſaid unto his Counſellors, Did not we caſt three men bound into the midſt of the fire? they anſwered and ſaid unto the King, True O King: He anſwered and ſaid, Lo, I ſee four men looſe walking in the midſt of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the forme of the fourth is like the Son of God:* They were but three that were caſt into the fire, but *Nebuchadnezzar* ſaw four there; And the forme of the Fourth was like the Son of God: Whether it were *Jeſus Chriſt* the Dan. 3. 24, 25.

naturall Son of God, or an Angel, who are called the Sons of God, here was a great honour; the Angels of the Lord are preſent with the Saints in their ſufferings, and *Jeſus Chriſt* is preſent with the Saints in their ſufferings: *When thou paſſeſt through the waters I will be with thee, and through the Rivers they ſhall not overflow thee, when thou walkeſt through the fire thou ſhalt not be burnt, neither ſhall the flame kindle on thee*: Angels company and Chriſts company is a wondrous honour: We count it a great honour to have Princes to be our companions; the Saints in their ſufferings have Princes for their companions, *Jeſus Chriſt* and his Angels: and thy ſuffering time is the opportunity to enjoy the company of theſe Princes and great ones.

Verſe 28. Job 1. 6.

Iai. 43. 2.

2 It was an honour to them, that God ſhould work ſuch a noble

ble miracle for them, as to ſtop the mouth of the fire, that it could not burn them; *And the Princes, Governours and Captains, and the Kings Counſellors being gathered together ſaw theſe men upon whoſe bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their heads ſinged, neither were their coats changed, nor the ſmell of fire had paſſed on them*: Ah wonderfull! So did God honour his ſervants: the fire ſtill retained its property of burning, and yet could not burn them: the power and (e) property of burning was not taken from the fire, for then it had been no miracle: what miracle is it for that thing not to burne which cannot burne? The miracle therefore did not conſiſt in taking away the naturall power of burning from the fire, but in this that when the fire had the greateſt heat and power of burning, yet it could not burn them: The fire had its full power and

(e) *Impoſſibile eſt propria perfecta, vel ad momentum temporis, ſuis ſubjectis ſeparari.* Keckerman log. lib. 1. *Mam urendi vis ab igne eſſet ſublata miraculum plane nullum a Deo fuit Editum; quid enim miraculi ſit eam rem non urere, quæ non poſſit urere? Non ergo in tollendâ ab igne urendi facultate miraculum conſiſtebat, ſed in eo quod cum vim urendi maximâ*

and property to burn, but could not exercise it: what an honour was it to walke safe in the midst of the fire? How did God magnify them, that they should be in the fire and yet be safe from the fire? the fire doth not kil them but kisse them: the fire doth not consume them, but court them; & denies it selfe, to give them courteous entertainment: they walke in the fire as in a pleasant aire: what honours are these put upon poor creatures! they were bound hand and foot, when they were cast into the fire, and yet *Nebuchadnezzar* sees them walk, the fire had heat to burn their bonds, but not power to touch their bodies: Had they mist this oportunity of suffering they had missed of this honor

3 Their suffering was the Churches honour and advantage: it won great respect and honour to the Jewish Church and Religi-

no

quis iste Babonicus obtineret, vis illa fuit divinitus impedita, ne se exereret, ut quidem statim post exeruit absumens eos qui in fornacem eandem injiciebantur. Kecker ibid.

on: *Nebuchadnezzar* makes a Decree that no people shal speak any thing amisse of the God of *Shadrach Meshach and Abednego*; Now their God comes into request with the King himselfe, and their deliverance flying abroad upon the wing of fame, makes their God famous, and their Religion famous & their people the Jews famous. How many taunts and derisions cast daily at the Jewes for their worship, were suppressed by the severity of this Law? Without doubt this Decree was of speciall use for the comfort of the Jewes, they had a sweet, calm, and Halcion time of peace and serenity upon it; Ah! what honor and advantage brought they to the Church by taking this opportunity of suffering?

4 And did not their suffering and their deliverance (think ye) strengthen the weak faith of their distressed

distressed brethren the poor Jews, Did it not inspire them with corage, and root them deeper in the love of their Religion? How many *Heathens* and *Chaldeans* might this great miracle of deliverance work home to the true God? Surely *Nebuchadnezzars* Decree made the learning of God famous among the *Gentiles*, a speciall help to conversion; as we may see in the three Magi, or wise men.

Ah my beloved! your sufferings may be the conversion of others; How willing would we be to preach a Sermon if we knew it would be the conversion of some Soul; Let me tell you that thy suffering for Christ may be the best Sermon that ever thou preachedst al thy life long, & win more upon souls, then all the Sermons thou didst preach in all thy life; as we say, that to live wel is the best preaching, I say also, to suffer

ſuffer well is the beſt preaching; To ſuffer for godlineſs is the moſt powerfull preaching of godlineſs. He that can ſuffer beſt for *Jeſus Chriſt*, is the beſt preacher of *Jeſus Chriſt*: the beſt ſufferer is the beſt Preacher.

Ah you Saints! this way you may all be Preachers: let your lives preach, and let your ſufferings preach *Jeſus Chriſt*; looſe not your opportunities of ſuffering.

5 I am ſure alſo they will increaſe your future glory: every ſuffering will be a graine put into the ſcale of your heavenly glory, to make it more weighty: *For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*: Oh! be for ever contented to have fellowſhip with *Jeſus Chriſt* in all his ſufferings; It is ſaid that the Saints have grace for grace

grace with *Jesus Christ*, be content also to have suffering for suffering with *Jesus Christ*, you shall also have glory for glory with him: if you have suffering for suffering, you shall also have glory for glory with him; Ah then! Loose not your opportunities of suffering for *Jesus Christ*; if you loose your opportunity of suffering, you loose a part, a beame of your glory, your glory in heaven will be so much the darker.

9 You that are young men, that are the twigs and branches of youth, you have blossomes of opportunities growing on you, which if you neglect you shall never have the like againe; There are oportunities that are married to youth, which if you sever can never be united againe; you have strength to serve Christ, which old age hath not; you have yet

no cares of the world in your heads to keep out heavenly contemplations; you are yet ſcarce in the world, and therefore have not much of the world in you: Oh drinke in heaven, before you drinke in the cares of the world into your thoughts; Fill your thoughts firſt with God before you fill them with the world; fill your Sayles with the gales of Chriſt, before they are filled with the aery vanities of the creature; you have a great deale of your time before you, when old men have their time behind them, gon and paſt, and but a little of it left before them.

10 So there is an opportunity ſometimes to ſave a whole Church which if we neglect we may never have the like again; Such an opportunity came before *Heſter*, which if ſhe had not lock't it in the face, and embraced it, all the Jewes

all the Jewes had been cut off at own blow by *Hamans* policy: He had got the Kings Decree that the thing ſhould be done, *If it pleaſe the King let it be written that they may be deſtroyed, and the King took his Ring from off his hand, and gave it unto Haman, and ſaid unto Haman, the ſilver is given unto thee, the people alſo to do with them as it ſeemeth good to thee*; The ſignet-Ring did repreſent the Kings authority and name; and therefore when one gave his Ring to another, he gave his power over to him to do what he would in his name; as *Pharoah* took his Ring off from his hand, and put it upon *Joſephs* hand, that *Joſeph* might in the Kings name ſigne Decrees as Viceroy of *Ægypt* and *Alexander* when he was ſick and lay ſpeechleſſe, and ſaw no hopes of life, took his Ring from his finger and gave it to *Perdiccas* to ſignifie (as is thought) that 'twas

Heſter 3. 9. 10, 11.

'twas his mind that *Perdiccas* ſhould ſucceed him: So *Haman* had got the Kings Ring to ſigne the fatall Decree, *And letters were ſent by poſt into all the Kings Provinces to deſtroy, to kill and to cauſe to periſh all Jewes both young and old, little children and women in one day:* here the poor Church was at a dead lift: *Hamans* teeming hopes were at the birth, nay (as it were) betwixt the womb and the world; and now heres an opportunity (now or never) to ſtep in and ſave the Church: Save Lord, now or never, *Heſter* takes the opportunity, *Who knows ſaith Mordecai to her, whether thou art come to the Kingdome for ſuch a time as this?* Such a time, which carries nothing but death in the womb of it: Such a time, wherein the Jews, as if all their necks had ſtood upon one ſhoulder, were deſtined to the blow: at this time *Heſter* ſtrangled

Verſe 13.

Heſter 4. 14.

the deſigne, and ſaved the Church by taking the opportunity, which had ſhe neglected, a thouſand to one ſhe her ſelfe had never eſcaped to have had the like againe.

11 Sometimes there's an opportunity given to reforme and purge a Land, which if we neglect may never be given againe in our dayes, as you may ſee in *Judges*, the firſt and ſecond Chapter; in the firſt Chapter there you ſhall find that the *Children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebuſites that inhabited Jeruſalem, but the Jebuſites did dwel with the children of Benjamin in Jeruſalem: Neither did Mannaſſeh drive out the inhabitants of Bethſhean and her townes, and neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: and neither did Zebulun drive out the Inhabitants of Kitron, nor the Inhabitants of Nahalol, but the Canaanites*

Judg. 1. 21. 27. 29, 30.

ites dwelt among them, and became Tributaries, & what then? ſee Judg. 2. 1, 2, 3. *An Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgall to Bochim and ſaid, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you into the Land which I ſware unto your Fathers, and I ſaid, I will never break my Covenant with you, and you ſhall make no league with the Inhabitants of this Land, you ſhall throw down their Alters, but you have not obeyed my voice* [*you have not apprehended* the ſeaſon and opportunity, what then? tis loſt in your dayes, and in your ſons dayes, for many generations] *For now I will not drive them out from before you:* I have ſaid it; it is now paſt cure, *but they ſhall be as thornes in your ſides, and their gods ſhall be a ſnare unto you, And when the Angel of the Lord ſpake theſe words unto all the children of Iſrael, the people lift up their voice, and wept, and they called the name of that place Bochim,* that is

Weepers: they wept so much, because they had let slip their opportunity, but all their floods of teares could not bring back the opportunity again, nor turne the tide: I pray God this be not *Englands* case; time was when we had the opportunity to destroy the *Canaanites*, Heresie, Eerror, Prophaneneſſe out of the Land: but now the bird of oportunity is fled out of our hand; She hath taken wing, is fled away and gone; and I feare me we ſhall not ſee her againe in our dayes; the Scepter of Jeſus Chriſt is the *primum mobile* of all good government, ſet him up, and his government right, and he will ſet States right; till this great wheel be ſet right, all the leſſer are like enough to goe wrong, Ah *England!* I am affraid of that Text concerning thee, *Becauſe I would have purged thee, and thou waſt not purged, thou ſhalt not be purged from thy*

thy filthineſſe any more, till I have cauſed my fury to reſt upon thee.

Let us now make application, And firſt then,

Vſe 1. Neglect not your opportunities of heaven, make the beſt of your ſouls opportunities, looſe not opportunity for a world: you have a world of opportunities, looſe not one opportunity for a world: O you that have ſouls to ſave, ſave your opportunities: oh your ſouls! oh your ſouls! I am afraid of your ſouls.

1 If you looſe your ſouls, we Miniſters looſe all our labour, and Chriſt looſeth all his blood that he hath ſhed for your ſoules, and what account can you give to God for ſo much coſt? Moſt of you doe not value your ſouls worth the ſaving: Many a man doth prize his Oxe or his Aſſe

more then ſome men prize their ſouls.

2 The Devils have loſt their opportunities, will you not take warning by the Devils? if you will not take your opportunities you will ſhortly be as irrecoverable as the Devils.

3 Opportunities loſt cannot be bought againe for gold: As *Ahab* could not buy *Naboths* Vineyard of him, *Naboth* would take no money for it; ſo opportunities loſt cannot be bought back again for money; if thou wouldſt bid never ſo high for them, thou canſt not have them upon any price; thou canſt not pray thine opportunities back againe, thou canſt not weep thine opportunities back again, as you may ſee by *Eſau*, he loſt his opportunity, and *when afterwards he would have inherited the bleſſing, he could finde no place of repentance, though he ſought it with tears: Jacob*

Heb. 12. 17.

was

was no ſooner gone away with the bleſſing, but *Eſau* comes in with hope of the bleſſing, the bleſſing was gone but one minute, and yet cannot be recovered.

4 Every opportunity thou looſeſt thou groweſt worſe & worſe: thou art bad to day, if thou looſeſt this opportunity, thou ſhalt be worſe to morrow: as *Cain*, God converſed with him (as it were) to day, *Why art thou wroth? why is thy countenance fallen, if thou doe well, ſhalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doeſt not well ſin lyeth at the door:* but he was not bettered by this opportunity, and preſently he grew worſe upon it, for the next thing he did was, *he talked with his brother Abel and ſlew him.* Gen. 4. 6, 7. Verſe 8.

5 Salvation, which theſe opportunities carry in their womb, is a tranſcendent birth, a bleſſing of the firſt magnitude: who would

not be ſaved? all things elſe are but ſhadows and trifles, to this reality called *Salvation.*

Thoſe are the ſons of wiſedom that contend for ſubſtance, for God, for heaven: God is not a thing indifferent, and, *Jeſus Chriſt*, is no circumſtance: Honors, eaſe, worldly profits and pleaſures, all theſe, theſe I ſay, are in their nature things indifferent, and being compared and put in the ſcale with Chriſt, are leſſe then things indifferent, even toyes, dreames, loſſe, dung, meer nothings, at beſt but fading things, that paſſe away as a picture drawn upon the Ice, which ſoon vaniſheth: They are meer accidents, nay ſeparable accidents, that may be taken from the ſubject without its hurt, a man may ſpare them and yet be happy; but God is the Eſſence of the Soul, the eternal Entity of our happineſſe, *This is life eternall to know*

Iſta divitiæ nec veræ ſunt nec veſtræ.

Joh. 17. 3.

know thee the only true God and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent.

6 It may be (O Sinner) that art now in thy ſins, it may be this very day, even this particular Sermon, may be thy day, that if thou repent not at this very Sermon thou looſeſt eternall life for ever.

Thus *Jeſus Chriſt* ended the day of grace on the Scribes and Phariſees even in the very Sermon time whilſt Chriſt was preaching to them, they were delivered up to hardneſſe of heart.

7 In a word, to paſſe by *Jeſus Chriſt*, carrieth with it the moſt ſurpaſſing wrath: to diſreſpect the offer of mercy uſhers in the greateſt miſery. *How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation.* That is, you ſhall not eſcape ſo, you ſhall not paſſe with an ordinary doome upon you. Heb. 2. 3.

Sinners! opportunity attends you, Chriſt is yours if you'l have him:

him : the Lord Jesus is at your service, if you will imbrace him : God sends up and downe the world to offer Salvation, hence that phrase [*my salvation is gone forth*] Mercy waits on you, and kneels to you, and does obeysance to your souls ; when you are running from it, mercy runs after you to catch you and imbrace you ; Ah how long hath free grace stood at your doors, waiting your leisure when you would let her in, yet she cals and knocks againe, you may yet be saved, but if you will goe on still, and disrespect mercy, it brings the greatest misery ; The greatest severity goes along with the Gospel ; greatest severity goes along with the greatest mercy.

The Gospel is the greatest mercy that ever saluted the world, and there's the greatest severity with the Gospel that ever came with

with any mercy into the world; Men ſhall be deeper in hel becauſe heaven was offered them, and they would not; All they ſuffer here is but typicall of the wrath to come; here they but ſip of the top of Gods cup, there they muſt drink the dregs, though it be eternity, to the bottome; a *Sodomite* in Hell ſhall fare better then the refuſer of Jeſus Chriſt, See *Mat.* 10. 14, 15. *And whoſoever ſhall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that houſe or City, ſhake off the duſt of your feet; Verily I ſay unto you it ſhall be more tollerable for the land of Sodome and Gomorah in the day of Judgement, then for that City.* Is not here the greateſt ſeverity with the greateſt mercy? So againe, in *Mat.* 11. 21, 22. *Woe unto thee Corazin, woe unto thee Bethſaidia, for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sydon, they would have repented long ago in*

Sack-

Sackcloath and aſhes; but I ſay unto you, it ſhall be more tollerable for Tyre and Sydon at the day of Judgement then for you. Is not here the greateſt ſeverity going along with the greateſt mercy?

God can better bear any thing then the contempt of his free grace in the offers of mercy.

More yet; When the Goſpel began to be preached, ſaith the Text, *Now is the Axe layed to the root of the Tree*; Jeſus Chriſt comes with his Basket and his Axe, his Basket to gather fruit, his Axe to cut downe the tree if it will not bear fruit; and is not here the greateſt ſeveri y with the greateſt mercy? If there were a ſword on *Moſes* thigh, there is an Axe in Chriſts hand. *Now is the Axe layd to the root of the tree* [Now] that is, your opportunity is Now, if you paſſe by this [now] you are gone, for ought I can tell, you are chopt

off

off presently. Neglect not the present [Now] least ye be cut off for ever.

8 Consider sin is your dishonour! it doth (f) degrade you. The vesture of mans nature is base and beggarly since it was patched with sin: It is a debasing of the gold to marry it with any mettal of a courser birth, so 'tis a dishonour to man to match his golden nature (so God at first made it holy and righteous) I say, to match thy golden nature to base-borne drosse, to low-borne sin, which derives its pedigree from hell. *Matth. 3. 10.*

(f) *Mundities enim necessaria est ad hoc, quod mens Deo applicetur quia mens Humana inquinatur ex hoc quod inferioribus rebus conjungitur, sicut qualibet Res ex immixtione pejoris sordescit, ut argentum ex immixtione plumbi.* Aquin. sum. 2a 2æ q. 8. 1. ar. 8. Corp.

None but *Jesus Christ* is a fit match for the soule of man, take the opportunity then, and make choice of *Jesus Christ*, Espouse thy soul to him, & keep the marriage-knot inviolate with him, *Ro.* 7. 4.

9 Come in quickly, take the opportunity to come in presently to *Jesus Christ*, least your sins (before

fore you are aware) ripen too fast, and you be cut down you know not how soon. Sins (g) multiply; one sin will shortly multiply into many; they are like circles in a pond, one circle begets another, so doth one sin beget another, a lesser begets a greater, as in a case of staires, one stair is a step to another, so every sin is a stair to help up to higher and worse sins.

It is wonderfull to behold the great flames bred out of small sparks of sin, how one sin hatched a greater; sin is like a whirlpool, which first sucks in one part, and then another, and never desists untill it draws in and plungeth the whole body.

10. A man may performe duties of Religion after his day of grace is set upon him. You think that as long as a man performes duties, and doth many good things, his day of grace is not past: My

(g) *De uno peccato enim in aliud, ex una turpitudine & stultitiâ in aliam ruerunt.* Ita Ætas parentum pejor avis tulit, Hos nequiore, mox daturos progeniem vitiosiorem *Neque tantum a peccato ad peccatum, sed ab errore & stultitiâ ad* φρενοβλάβειαν *ad insaniam & corruptionem mentis, ac rationis Eversionem proceditur.* Cocceius, ad 2 Tim. 3.

My beloved, obſerve me, a man may come to Church, performe religious duties, doe many good things, have many meltings upon his heart, after his day of grace is paſt & gon: as *Saul* went on in duties of Religion as wel after *Samuel* had pronounced the Lords doom upon him as before; how many times was he offering ſacrafice to the Lord, after the Prophet had told him that he was a man rejected? how many good ſpeeches came from him? what meltings ſometime fell in upon his ſoule? as if there were hopes of him, and yet a loſt man, his opportunities were paſt: cloſe then, cloſe preſently with the opportunities of Jeſus Chriſt.

Vſe 2. My ſecond Uſe ſhall be to ſet out unto you the excellency and Majeſty of Gods opportunities, that you may ſtand in awe and reverence of them, and by no means

means ſlight them or neglect them: Myſteries are dreadfull, we honour them; *There are myſteries in Gods opportunities.* My beloved, there are theſe three characters of myſterie and excellency engraven upon Gods opportunities; It may be ſome may think of and adde more, but I at preſent obſerve three characters of myſterie and excellency upon Gods opportunities.

Myſteria tremenda.

1. They are eaſie.

2. They are ſudden and unexpected.

3. Sometimes they come beſide our intention.

Firſt, Gods opportunities are eaſie, they bring great matters to birth with eaſie travell; they bring hard things to paſſe eaſily: Oh that this were obſerved. In Gods opportunity it is an eaſie thing to believe, to repent, to ſubdue a ſin, and to overcome a temp-

temptation; as it is an eaſie matter for the Ship to go when ſhe hath the winde to fill her ſayls. Every thing is done eaſily in Gods opportunity, whether it be to ſave a ſoul, or to deſtroy a ſoul; becauſe God in his opportunity makes all things concur and brings circuſtances together to ſtrike up the action ſuddenly; you ſhall ſee it.

1. In the ruine of a man, in the deſtruction of a man: when 'tis Gods opportunity to deſtroy a man, what eaſie way will he make for't? As *Saul*, when Gods time came that he muſt periſh, he ſlew himſelfe, there was no difficulty in the work, he fell himſelfe upon his ſword, as the ſtone doth to its center: How eaſily was *Jericho* taken? when the Prieſts blew the Trumpets, and the people ſhouted, the walls fell down flat of themſelves: How eaſily 1 Sam. 31. 4.

was *Pharoah* and his Army deſtroyed in the red Sea? the Sea was divided, and a way made for him, that he might not ſtand upon't, but run voluntary into the womb of death; Oh the efficacy of Gods opportunities! How eaſily did *Goliah* fall, what ſtirs and bluſterings did he act a little before upon the ſtage of pride and boaſting, making a challenge to all *Iſrael?* but when Gods opportunity comes how eaſily is he ſlain? And therefore the Scripture ſpeaks this with an Emphaſis, *So David prevailed over the Philiſtine with a ſling and with a ſtone and ſmote the Philiſtine, and ſlew him, but there was no ſword in the hand of David.*

2. So Gods oportunities work good for men eaſily, they bring great matters of good to paſſe with no difficulty: When 'tis Gods opportunity that *David* ſhall

ſhall take poſſeſſion of his Kingdome it falls into his mouth (as it were) not onely *Saul*, but all his ſons (that might ſtand as ſo many ſcreens between *David* and the Crown) are taken out of the way. The houſe of *Judah*, they of themſelves, come and annoint *David* King over them. Then *Abner*, *Sauls* Generall of his whole Army, diſpleaſed with *Iſhboſheth* revolts to *David*, and all the Tribes come to *Hebron* to annoint *David* King over *Iſrael*: Doe you ſee? this great work is done to his hand.

So in Gods opportunities it is an eaſie thing to believe and repent, *Acts* 16. 14. *Luke* 19. 6. 1 *Kings* 19. 20.

Ah my beloved! the eaſe of believing and repenting attends a peculiar opportunity of Gods own vouchſafing, in which he doth more readily work then at other times.

How ſhall I know when 'tis eaſie for me to believe and repent?

1. When the light of the ſpirit doth flaſh into the eye of thy ſoul, then thy work is eaſie, as when the light of the day doth dart its rayes in at the windows of thy Chamber 'tis eaſie for thee to read a ſmall print. Thus when a light from Heaven did ſhine upon *Paul*, and ſhine into *Paul*, how eaſie did his work come off? Lord what wilt thou have me to doe?

2. When thy heart is made combuſtible and ready to take fire; as when the tinder is dry 'tis eaſie to light a candle, the leaſt ſpark that falls on it takes fire, and when the fire is combuſtible, it is an eaſie matter to kindle a fire, it burns preſently: So when thy heart is ſoftned it eaſily takes the impreſſion of the ſeal upon it, and when thy thoughts are ſtir'd up

and

and made combuſtible, 'tis an eaſie matter to kindle them into a fire of repentance, as in the *Acts*, when they were pricked in the heart, they ſaid, *Men and brethren what ſhall we doe? Repent* (ſaith *Peter*) and they took preſently. Acts 2.

3. When thine affections and deſires are upon the wheel, then any work is eaſie, as when a load is upon the wheel 'tis drawn eaſily, whereas if you ſhould go about to lug it along upon the ground it comes on heavily; and therefore the Lord purſuing *Pharoah*, took off his Chariot wheels, and they drave on heavily: So when God puts thine affections upon the wheel, and ſets them a going, then 'tis eaſie for thee to doe great matters, and therefore obſerve thine opportunity.

Secondly, Gods opportunities are ſudden and unexpected: they come upon us without prepara-

tion; God doth not ſend us word before hand, when he will viſit us and come to us, as ſometimes we ſend to a friend that we will dine with him, or ſpeak with him at ſuch an hour; but Gods opportunities come ſuddenly upon us in the twinkling of an eye, before we be aware, when we know nothing of it, and the ſpirit ruſheth in upon a man, and gives him no notice before hand; Thus Chriſt came and called *Matthew* [*Follow me*] on a ſudden, whilſt he was ſitting at the receit of Cuſtome, *And he aroſe & followed him.*

Some poor ſouls have ſent up many a Prayer to heaven for aſſurance, and it hath not come, and they poor creatures have thought that God hath not regarded them all the while, and then, on a ſudden, aſſurance hath come when they lookt not for it: Ah dear father, how many mercies from thee

thee have come to us uninvited! thy preventing grace and mercy doth always visit us uninvited; we send not for it, it comes freely to us.

Thirdly, Gods opportunities come besides our intention, they come sometimes when we aime not at them: We stumble upon heaven, when we are seeking something else; as a man that digged in his garden onely to set roots and plants, and found a pot of gold there; and as *Saul* went to *Samuel* to enquire for his Fathers Asses, and found a Kingdome. This was besides his intention, he sought one thing and found another, his poor Asses were his intention, but a Crown was the object he met with in execution. Oh the mysteries of opportunity! 'Tis so many times in the matters of heaven, *I am found saith God of them that sought*

me not. Many a ſoul findes Heaven beſides his intention : How ſtrangely doe ſome meet with a Commiſſion ? they meet with heaven and grace by accident (as it were) they go to a place onely to ſeek health or food, ſomething for the body, and there they light upon (beſides their intention) ſalvation for their ſouls ; as the lame man ſeeing *Peter* and *John* aſked an almes, there was all his intention, and met with a cure both of body and ſoul : and the woman of *Samaria* came to the Well for water, and there found a Chriſt ; it was an accident to her to meet Chriſt there : Gods opportunity comes upon her beſides her intention : Ah gracious God ! that ſhe ſhould come for water that very hour when Chriſt was there, not before nor after, but that very hour when Chriſt is there ; ſhe came for water which was but puddle, and found

a Spring of life: So the Marriners that took *Jonah* into their Ship, they received him onely for the fare, he payd them, that was all their intention, their fare and pay for carriage was all their aime, but they met with a better fare, converſion to the true God, *verſe* 16. *Then the men* (they were Heathens) *feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a ſacrifice to the Lord* [that is, to the true God, not to Neptune but to the Lord] *and made vows.* So *Moſes* went to mount *Horeb* onely to keep his Fathers ſheep, but there he met with God in the burning buſh. Thus you ſee Gods opportunities are cloathed with ſtately robes of myſtery upon them, behold them therefore with holy fear and reverence. Jonah 1. 3.

Uſe 3. My third Uſe ſhall give the meeting to tender ſouls, who will be ready from the breaſts of this doctrine to ſuck in fears and ſcruples,

ſcruples, giving up their opportunities for gon: If this be ſo, then we have loſt our opportunities.

Obj. 1. *I am an old ſinner, and have ſtood it out all my days hitherto againſt Jeſus Chriſt, he hath often called me, & I have often refuſed him.*

Anſw. Yet thou art not in hell, thou art yet on this ſide the grave: O praiſe mercy and free grace, that thou art not yet in the center of hell: Thou canſt not ſay that the oyle of opportunity is ſpent, as long as thou haſt a veſſell more, a day, or year yet more left to receive it; the widows oyle ran ſtill as long as there was a veſſell to receive it: Thou canſt not ſay that opportunity is done, till life be done: God hath many opportunities, though many are loſt, yet all are not paſt. Thou ſayſt thou haſt loſt ſome opportunities, but God hath many opportunities in ſtore: Indeed,

deed, if God had but one opportunity for thee and no more, thou wert gone, as *Esau* ſaid unto *Iſaac*, *Haſt thou but one bleſſing oh my Father?* But God hath many bleſſings, he hath many mercies, and therefore many opportunities for loſt ſouls, he doth not give off for many denyalls; after many refuſualls God comes on again, and woos afreſh: he hath a treaſury of opportunities, a quiver full of opportunities, and if one arrow of mercy be ſpent, if more arrows of opportunities be loſt, and thrown away upon thee, he hath more yet to ſhoot at thee, and more yet; Oh that God would now draw out an arrow of converſion, and hit thy ſoul with it! What though God hath bent his bow, and ſhot many an arrow, many a Sermon at thee, and miſſed? Yet he will ſhoot again, he can ſhoot and hit, he is rich in mercies

Gen. 27. 38.

mercies, and therefore rich in opportunities.

Obj. 2. *Oh, but I have left my first love, I have abated in my flame of love to God, and his word, and the power of godlineſſe; and is my opportunity yet before me to recover? is it not loſt?*

Anſw. No, it is not loſt, thine opportunity yet is not gone, as you may ſee in *Rev.* 2. 4, 5. *Nevertheleſſe I have ſomewhat againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt love.* Obſerve, thou that haſt decayed in the heat of thy firſt love, God hath ſomewhat againſt thee, he hath a quarrell with thee, and therefore awake with all ſpeed, for God hath ſomewhat againſt thee, but yet thine opportunity is not gone: for ſaith God in the next words; *Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent, and doe thy firſt works,* there's yet opportunity that ſhines onthee, the Sun is not yet ſet, though it be

be going down: *and if thou wilt remember whence thou art fallen, and repent*, and make haſte to riſe, God will rather make the Sun to ſtand ſtill as he did in *Joſhuahs* time) [the ſun of oportunity ſhal rather ſtand ſtil in the orbe of time, then that thou ſhalt looſe thy ſoul, and therefore looke about thee.

Obj. 3. *Oh but I am grown luke-warme in religion, which is the worſt temper of all the reſt, I care not which end goes forward.*

Anſw. Chriſt will afford thee opportunities yet, as you may ſee in the Church of *Laodicea*, *Rev.* 3. 15. *I know thy works* [*I know what they are and utterly diſlike them*] *thou art neither hot nor cold*, Thou art neither an open enemy, nor yet truly zealous of my Goſpel, ver. 16. *Therefore becauſe thou art luke warm I will ſpue thee out of my mouth:* as tepid and luke-warme water doth provoke the ſtomack to it out again: So will I (ſaith God)

ſpew

ſpew thee and thy profeſſion out, it, is ſo loathſome to me. Obſerve (thou luke-warm Chriſtian) thou art in a ſad and dangerons condition, God cannot bear with thy profeſſion long; as the ſtomack cannot hold luke-warme water long within it, yet thine opportunities are not yet gone, for ſaith Chriſt, *Behold I ſtand at the door, and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and ſup with him and he with me*; though thou art luke warme and deſerveſt with thy profeſſion to be ſpewed out of my mouth, *yet I ſtand at the door and knock*: Chriſt was going; (O obſerve thou luke-warm Chriſtian, and therefore ſaith he) *I ſtand at the door and knock*, but (ſaith he) I'le pauſe a while before I goe, I'le ſtay a little and then goe, I am unwilling to leave thee yet, though thou ſhut me out I will not yet be gone, though

Verſe 20.

though the door be lockt againſt me, yet I'le knock a while; for this phraſe ſhews that Chriſt was ſtayed from entring in preſently the doors being ſhut againſt him; yet he would ſtand there waiting, though you be all aſleep within, yet I wil ſee whether I can knock you up: The opportunity waited ſtill upon them.

Obj. 4. *But God ſeems to have caſt me off into a Sea of ſadneſſe and deſertion: he hath thrown me over Shipboard out of his preſence into a depth of deſpaire; I ſinke, I ſink under his anger, I feare me I ſhall never recover, I am ſo drowned in the Ocean of his frownes, his waves are gone over my Soule.*

Anſw. A man may think himſelfe gone, and yet his opportunity not gone, he may think himſelfe paſt helpe, and yet his opportunity not paſt; he may ſay, God hath caſt me off, I ſhall never recover more,

more, never ſee the face of God more, and yet opportunity ſhews its face againe, and ſmiles upon him. I will give you a ſtrange inſtance, *Jonah* in the Whales belly, he had ſinned, highly againſt the Lord, like a Runagate who fled from his Maſters ſervice, and when he was upon the Sea, a tempeſt purſueth him, which would not give him over; a Lot to diſcover the malefactor is caſt, and it fals upon *Jonas*; The Marriners they caſt him over Ship-board: here was a fearfull caſe, to be caſt over Ship-board with a guilty conſcience: how did he fall into the Sea, that had a Sea of terrour in him? Well; he is caſt in, and a Whale ſwallows him, in whoſe belly he is lodged for three dayes and three nights, after ſuch a manner as was never heard of before: how perplexed was his ſtate think you? a man drowned and not drowned;

drowned; devoured, but not digeſted; alive, but yet as dead; ah what a dying ſoul had he in the living Fiſh! expecting every minute the fearefull diſſolution of his Soul from his body; for he was under horror of conſcience, now lying on him for his ſin, & dreadfull conflict of Spirit, as if God had forſaken him, and given ſentence on him, for you ſhall read, ſome ſuch were his expreſſions, *Thou haſt caſt me into the deep*, that is, the Sea; *then I ſaid, I am caſt out of thy ſight, my Soul fainted within me*, Here *Jonah* thought his opportunity was gone, but the Whale brings him ſafe to the ſhore, the Whales belly was a place of ſafety, a Sanctuary to him, had not the Whale received him, he might have been drowned, for he could not ſwim to the ſhore. Ah thou poor dejected ſoul! know that God can be angry, and yet love thee; he can throw thee into

Jonah 2. 3, 4.

the belly of deſpaire, and make thee live in it, as the child doth in the wombe, the Mothers belly is the Babes Sanctuary, the childe lyes ſafe in the womb, ſo ſhalt thou lye ſafe in the belly of deſpaire, God will make the belly or womb of deſpaire to travel in birth till thou art delivered, and therefore doe as *Jonah* did, beleeve in the midſt of deſpaire, pray unto the Lord, cry unto him out of the Whales belly, *Out of the belly of hell* (ſaith *Jonah*) *I cryed and thou heardeſt my voice*; Ah, bleſſed word! God will hear thee when thou art at the worſt; if thou couldeſt pray in hell, and repent in hell, were thou in hell, if thou couldſt beleeve there, God would hear thee there; a ſweet word to a deſpairing ſoule: *Jonah* in the Whales belly, ſaid, *Yet will I look again toward thy holy Temple*? God will give thee leave to look up to him though thou art in the bottom of deſtruction

Jonah 2. 2.

on: *I am caſt out of thy ſight* (ſaid *Jonah*) *yet I will looke againe toward thy holy Temple*? A ſoul is never ſo forſaken of God, but he may look up to his God; though thou art caſt out of his ſight, yet he will give thee leave to look upon him: ah thou forſaken ſoul! a look from thee will pierce his boſome, a mournfull look from the childe wounds the breaſt of an angry father; though the child dares not ſend out a word, yet a mournfull and longing look conquers his Fathers heart: Art thou forſaken of God? yet thine opportunity is not gone, dart a look upon him, if thou canſt not pray to him, yet look upon him: God looks to ſee whether thou wilt loook upon he waits to begracious, thou waiteſt to be comforted, he waits o comfort thee. Iſa. 30. 18.

5 Mans extremity is Gods opportunity: when thou art moſt ready to periſh, then is God moſt

ready to ſave: God ordinarily doth not ſave in danger, but in extremity of danger: when 'tis at the worſt with thee, then 'tis Gods opportunity to help thee, as the woman that had the bloody iſſue, her extremity was Chriſts opportunity; She had a waſting diſeaſe upon her, and time added to it; twelve long years had ſhe withered and languiſhed under it; beſides the tediouſneſſe, her diſeaſe muſt needs get head by continuance, yet more to mend the matter, poverty (which is another diſeaſe) was ſuper-added to her ſickneſſe (ſhe had ſpent all that ſhe had upon Phyſicians) her extremity now ſwels great, ſhe hath two evils at once upon her, two unſufferable evils, though ſhe were ſick, yet her wealth (as long as ſhe had it) would have maintained and ſuccoured her in her ſickneſſe, but now want doth pinch her no leſſe then her diſtemper, and helps to mak

make her perfectly miſerable: ſhe is now perfectly miſerable, weake and ſick, and nothing to refreſh her in her weakneſſe: had ſhe ſpent all and gained her health, it had been well enough, but alas, ſhe hath beggered her ſelfe, undone her ſtate, and her body, & never the better, her mony was waſted not her diſeaſe. Now her extremity is at the height, what then? her extremity is Chriſts opportunity; when her caſe is moſt deſparat ſhe is healed. *If I can but touch the hem of his garment I ſhall be whole.* So the widow of *Sarepta*; *Elijah* ſent to her by God to be ſuſtained by her: when he comes he ſuſtaines her, ſhe is ſuſtained by him: for when he comes and asks her food, *bring me I pray thee a morſell of bread in thine hand*, ſhe tels him, *as the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a Cake, but an handfull of meal in a barrell, and a little oyle in a Cruiſe, and behold I am gathering two ſticks, that I may go in*

and dreſſe it for me and my Son, that we may eat it and dye. She was now upon the borders of extremity: It was high time for the Lord to ſend the Prophet to her, for (poor Soul) ſhe was now making her laſt meal: after one meane morſel ſhe was yeelding her ſelfe over to death, ſhe was now going to eat her laſt, that ſhe might dye: and what then? truly her extremity was Gods opportunity, *Feare not ſaid Elijah to her, goe and doe as thou haſt ſaid; make me a little Cake firſt, and bring it to me, and after make for thee and thy ſon; for thus ſaith the Lord God of Iſrael, the Barrel of meal ſhall not waſte, neither ſhall the Cruiſe of oyl faile untill the day that the Lord ſendeth raine upon the earth.* What a ſhowre of comfort was here? ſhe was going to eat her laſt and dye, and God ſends the Prophet to her to provide for her the whole famine: How opportunely doth God provide ſuccour to our diſtreſſes!

resses! It is his glory to helpe at a pinch, to begin where we have given over, that his mercy may be so much the more welcome by how much it is the lesse look't for.

6 Though I have lost time, yet (say) Lord thou hast not lost time, thou wert before all time, and canst set time yet before me: My losse of time doth not put thee to a losse.

Obj. 7. *But will God be a looser by me? I have lost him abundance of glory which I might have done him, had I improved my opportunities: In my loosing my opoortunities, God hath lost a great deal of his glory.*

Answ. 1. God will be content to sit downe by the losse if thou wilt but come in now: Oh transcendent mercy! he will loose a great part of his glory rather then loose thy soul, for he knows he can bear the losse better then thou canst.

2 What he looſeth of his glory by the one way, he gaines another way, in pardoning of thee; he counts it his glory to pardon thee, as the Holy Ghoſt, ſaith, *It is a mans glory to paſſe over a tranſgreſſion.* In pardoning the ſins thou haſt lived in for a time, he will gain glory to himſelfe beyond all time; Thou haſt ſinned againſt him ſome years, and ſo he hath loſt his glory by thee for ſome years, but if he pardon thee thou wilt glorify him (wilt thou not?) for ever.

Pro. 19. 11.

3 What ever glory thou haſt loſt him, he hath it all made up in Jeſus Chriſt: come in now then and ſerve him cheerfully in Chriſt, doe more for him in a little time, then thou haſt done againſt him in a long time.

Obj. 8. *But I have prayed long, and waited a great while, and the Lord doth not hear nor anſwer me, and therefore my opportunity is paſt when*

when God hath done hearing, prayer the opportunity is paſt.

Anſw. 1. This doth not argue that thine opportunity is gone, but that God doth not anſwer thee as ſoon as thou aſkeſt: Thine opportunity is not paſt, but onely God takes his leaſure to hear thee when he pleaſeth: the opportunity is not paſt, but God makes thee ſtay a while before he anſwers; the Lord doth not alwayes time his anſwers to the ſwiftneſſe of our expectations.

2. Gods delays ſhould make thee ſet on him with greater ſtrength, and his putting thee off ſhould make thee put on afreſh with ſtronger violence; as the cold weather makes the fire burn hotter, ſo Gods ſlackneſſe ſhould make thee more hot and earneſt in prayer; and (by an holy Antiperiſtaſis) be kindled from his coldneſſe: Thus 'tis with the men

men of the world, when *Balak* ſent meſſengers unto *Balaam* to come unto him, and curſe the People *Iſrael*; *Balaam* denyed him, and ſent him word back, that God would not give him leave to come: what then? ſaith the Text, *Balake ſent again certain Princes more, and more honourable then they*, ſo little is *Balak* diſcouraged with one refuſall, that he
Numb.22,15. ſent ſo much the ſtronger meſſage, *More Princes and more honourable*; ah that we could be ſo importunate for our good, and with our God! a denyall doth but whet the deſires of vehement Suitors: Why are ye faint in ſpirituall things, when ye are not denyed but delayed? doth God put thee off? ſend up more Prayers, and more honourable again to him.

3. And therefore when after much ſeeking thou meeteſt not with

with peace and aſſurance, doe not ſay thine opportunity is paſt, but rather ſay, thine opportunity is not yet come, or thine opportunity is yet to come, *For yet a little time, and he that ſhall come will come, and will not tarry.* Heb. 10. 37.

How ſhall I know mine opportunity is yet to come?

1. When thou liveſt in expectation, when thou ſtandeſt upon thy watch tower to ſee what he will ſay unto thee.

2. When thou waiteſt in the uſe of means, when thou wilt not leave the uſe of means: when thou ſtickeſt by the Pool of *Bethesda*, as the lame man did, that had a diſeaſe eight and thirty years, there he came to be healed, but he was ſtill prevented, becauſe when he was going down into the water, another always ſtept down before him; yet there he ſtayed, he knew there was the Hab. 2. 1.

place

place and means of healing, and from thence he would not go; if he would lie any where he would lie there: and was his opportunity loſt, though he had waited long, and been put by often? (this is the very doubt) No ſurely, Chriſt viſits him at laſt, there he waited in the uſe of means, and rather then fail he ſhall be healed without means.

3. When the Fig-tree bloſſomes, then thine opportunity is yet to come, nay 'tis at hand: when any bloſſomes of goodneſſe any buds and beginnings of a work appear, any breathings of ſoul in thee after Chriſt, then thine opportunity is at hand; as Chriſt ſaid, *Learn a Parable of the Fig-tre, when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, know that Summer is nigh*; and therefore cheriſh every bloſſome of grace, though never ſo tender in thee.

Mat. 24. 32.

Let

Let not a *May* froſt nip them : *Be ye lift up ye everlaſting doors, and the King of glory ſhall come in :* When your doors, your ſouls begin to lift up themſelves ever ſo little after Chriſt, the King of glory is coming in.

Obj. 9. *But you bid us take the opportunity, and come in now to Jeſus Chriſt, and believe in him and repent, and come out of ſin : alas you bid us doe what we cannot doe, we cannot believe, nor repent, nor come out of ſin, or come to Jeſus Chriſt of our ſelves.*

Anſw. 1. You are to believe that you cannot believe of your ſelfe, or repent of your ſelfe, or come out of ſin by your own ſtrength : and you are not therefore the farther from Chriſt, in that you are ſo far from your ſelves, nay you are nearer to Jeſus Chriſt. The farther you go out of your ſelves, and out of your own

own ſtrength, the nearer you are gone to Jeſus Chriſt: when you ſeriouſly and feelingly ſay that you cannot believe of your ſelves, this is the firſt ſeed of faith, I ſay, to believe that you cannot believe of your ſelves is the firſt ſeed of faith: you muſt firſt believe your own weakneſſe, that you may have power from Chriſt to believe in Chriſt: Is there ever a poor ſoul then in this Congregation, that cryes out, I cannot come out of ſin of my ſelfe? this is the firſt work and ſtep unto Jeſus Chriſt, to receive ſtrength from him to come out of ſin: doſt thou ſay thou canſt not come out of ſin of thy ſelfe? Now thou art the farther from thy ſelfe, and the nearer to Jeſus Chriſt: They whom Chriſt helps, he makes them firſt ſee themſelves helpleſs; Jeſus Chriſt gives ſtrength to them, whom he makes

makes to ſee their own nothingneſſe: they that ſay they cannot believe, Jeſus Chriſt is in the way to make them believe: They that ſay, Lord I cannot overcome my ſin, Jeſus Chriſt becomes their Conquerour for them; thy nothingneſſe ſhall ſet out his power, *For my ſtrength* (ſaith he) *is made perfect in weakneſſe.* 2 Cor. 12. 9.

2. And again, whereas thou ſayeſt, I bid thee doe what thou canſt not doe, thou canſt not repent, nor come out of ſin of thy ſelfe, I anſwer and tell thee, *God offers his hand with thee to the work*, he does not onely offer thee work to doe, but he offers his hand with thee to the work; while he bids thee believe, his hand ſhall be with thee to make thee believe: This is the excellency and kindneſſe of the Covenant of grace, when the Goſpel bids thee leave ſin, it puts in thee a new nature,

nature, that is contrary to ſin, to hate it more then hell; If a man (to whom thou oweſt ſo much) bid thee pay him a thouſand pounds, and give thee the thouſand pounds in thy hand to pay him, now it is eaſie. Jeſus Chriſt in the Goſpell doth not onely ſay to thee, pay me what thou oweſt me. I am thy Saviour, believe in me, I come down from heaven to die for thee, come out of ſin to ſerve me; I bought thee with a price, pay me down thy ſelfe, thy ſervice which thou oweſt me. I ſay Jeſus Chriſt doth not onely thus bid thee (poor ſinner) believe in him, and come out of ſin, but he is ready to give thee his grace and ſtrength to make payment. *A new heart will I give thee, and a new ſpirit will I put into thee:* and therefore doe not ſay abſolutely, I cannot believe, or I cannot come out of ſin, for Jeſus Chriſt

Chriſt is ready to give thee thy thouſand pounds thou oweſt him, that thou mayſt pay him out of his own ſtock; that thou mayſt believe out of his treaſury, that thou mayſt come out of ſin by his grace and mercy; The Lord Jeſus offers his hand with thee to the work: as *Bernard* tels us of Pope *Eugenius*, that meeting with a poor but honeſt Biſhop, he ſecretly gave him certain Jewels wherewith he might preſent him: So Jeſus Chriſt will give thee the Jewells of faith and repentance wherewith thou mayſt preſent him: If God did not furniſh us, we ſhould have nothing wherewith to honour him: The Father that gave thee Chriſt will give thee faith to receive Jeſus Chriſt, and Jeſus Chriſt that gave thee himſelfe, will give thee his ſpirit to draw thee to himſelfe.

How ſhall we know our opportunities ?

I will lay down but two things before you.

1. Conſult with the Lord : as it is ſaid of the children of Iſrael, that when the *Gibeonites* deceived them with a wile, and they ſpared their lives, whom they ſhould have deſtroyed, the Text ſaith, *They asked not counſell at the mouth of the Lord* ; they had an opportunity here put into their hands to deſtroy the *Gibeonites*, but they miſſed it, becauſe they did not conſult with the Lord : do but compare the ſeventh verſe with the fourteenth, and you ſhall ſee how right a man may gueſſe of a thing ſometimes, and yet want a clear light and diſcovery of it, becauſe he doth not adviſe with the Lord; in the ſeventh verſe, *Said the men of Iſrael to the Hivites, peradventure you dwel amongſt us, and how ſhall we make league with you?*

Joſhua 9. 14.

you? here the Iſraelites did gueſſe aright, it was paſt (a peradventure) for they did live among them; and therefore could not make a league with them: How right doe they hit? how true was their conjecture? Now the lock of oportunity was before them, they might have laid hold upon it, but they were in the dark, and walkt in a cloud, not knowing who the *Gibeonites* were, *becauſe they asked not counſel at the mouth of the Lord*, that is, by the high Prieſt putting on the breaſt-plate of judgement wherein was the Urim and Thummim, ſo the reaſon why we know not our opportunities is becauſe we conſult not with the Lord: as he is the maker of time, ſo he is the revealer of time unto us: Nay, Gods will to work at ſuch a time, is that which makes an opportunity, as ſuppoſe a man in a curious Apple-tree or Plumb-tree: your opportunity to gather, and

carry away fruit is, when it is his will to ſhake the tree, before or after is no opportunity : you may walke, and watch about the tree, when he will ſhake down the fruit but when he hath done ſhaking, your opportunity is done. So the Lord, who is the husbandman of his Church, he hath among all his other trees planted the tree of time, and he himſelf ſits upon the top of the tree (as the God of time, the diſpoſer of time) and when it is his will to ſhake the tree, then is your opportunity: So that if you would know your opportunities you muſt conſult with the Lord, Lord, when wilt thou ſhake thy tree? when wilt thou drop down the fruit, that I may gather into my lap?

John 15. 1: 1 Cor. 3. 9.

2 If you would not looſe any oportunity, apprehend every one; as *Abraham* by entertaining ſtrangers, entertained Angels unawares: As a man that keeps an Inne, by entertaining

tertaining all travellers that come, oftentimes entertains a Noble-man or a Prince: So if thou entertain all oportunities that come, thou ſhalt at laſt entertain the noble opportunity, the Angel opportunity, the Prince of opportunities, the Soul-ſaving opportunity: a thouſand to one thou ſhalt entertain Chriſt at laſt: as the Inne at *Bethlem* that entertained all paſſengers, entertained Chriſt himſelfe there.

Sinners, I told you before, that God will at one hour or other come with a caſting command: one command that ſhall have the caſting voice; that if you obey not then, mercy will ſhut up ſhop, and trade with you no more, but give you up for ever; and therefore I ſay now, if you would not looſe any opportunity, take every opportunity.

And now give my diſcourſe leave to caſt ſome beams of reflection

upon that worthy Gentleman whom God hath taken from us: 'Tis our duty to ſpeak ſomething of him: Though we bury his body, yet 'tis not fit we ſhould bury his worth in a grave of ſilence and oblivion, and truly (my beloved) I doe not thinke ye can bury the ſweet remembrance of him; He will live a long time after his death, though he be dead, yet he cannot dye, his name cannot expire ſo ſoon: Oh! that what good was in him might live after him to give us example: He was an exemplary pattern; when hee's laid in this grave hee'l live above the grave, the ſweet ſmelling ſpices of his lovely life and converſation will inbalme him, and keep him unperiſht in your thoughts many years. I need not blazon his coat of arms (you may ſee them upon the ſable heatſe) the worth of his deſcent or luſtre

of

of his family, *Et genus & proavos & quæ non fecimus ipsi*; you did all honour him and know him, Mr. *Walcot* of *Walcot*: beſides that he was honored with the office of Juſtice of peace in his Country, and truly I thinke the office in ſome meaſure received honour from him, for he adorned it with his vertues: he moved in that ſphear for many years together, in which place both he and that worthy Gentleman, now with the Lord, M. *Rich. More* of *Linley* Eſq. (whom for honors ſake I cannot but revive and mention) In which place I ſay (you all know) how they two uniting their beames together, refreſhed your country with the warmth of their influence; executing Juſtice, relieving the poor, placing Orphans, puniſhing offendors, ſuppreſſing the prophanation of Sabbaths countenancing the god-

And once a Member of the Parliament.

ly, ſupporting the courſe of godlineſſe and religion, honoring and backing the faithfull Miniſters of God. I well remember thoſe times, I ſpeak but what ye all know.

He was alſo (having intereſt in ſo many Churches) as great an inſtrument (I think) as any in the Country, to propagate the Goſpell, and preaching of the word.

That excellent man of God Mr. *Pierſon* of *Brampton Brian* had a large room in this Gentlemans heart, and kindled that pious flame in him: and when Mr. *Pierſon* dyed, this flame dyed not in this Gentlemans breaſt, till the oyle of his life waſted; ſurely 'twas a true work, it laſted in him.

It was his care to get as godly Miniſters, and able as he could; and how dear was his Miniſters to him? I dare ſay, next to his wife and children, firſt, he was a

father

father to them: they were to overſee the flock, and truly he would overſee them that they ſhould want nothing according to his ability. When they came to viſit him, his common quære was, Is it comfortable with you? doe you want? tell me if you do, let me know it? I would not have you diſcouraged, nor go on drooping in Gods work. I ſpeak but truth, themſelves are witneſſes.

He was a mirrour and example of temperance to all the Gentry in the country.

I know no greater infirmity did lie upon him then timerouſneſſe, he had not that height of maſculine ſpirit which dwelt in ſome men.

But my beloved, he that is without ſin among you let him caſt the firſt ſtone.

He was as meek as a Lamb: a child

child might reprove him: an inferiour might boldly tell him where (he thought) he went awry. I never found any lik him in this, he would ever love a man for it.

As for Covetousnesse, I dare say he was not much acquainted with it: for 1 when he had an opportunity to exercise covetousnesse in the disposure of the Vicarage of *Clun*, he gave it me as freely as the Sun shines upon me in the day time he was no mercenary Patron. 2 Covetousnesse and mercy never dwel together: a covetous man cannot be a mercifull man: but he was a man made up of pity and mercy to the poor; I speak but what you all know; the bellies of the hungry, and the backs of the naked did every year proclaim his bounty and charity. 3 Besides a covetous liver is no free giver in secret: a covetous man, when he gives, will cause his gifts to run

in a visible channel to be seen of men; but (to my knowledge) he was a secret and hidden reliever of godly widows and others that were in want; he refresht their bowels with his hid treasures: he would send to know their indigencies and their straits: they need not send to him, he would send to them. 4 Yet more, a covetous man is not a cheerfull man under losses: but he was sweet and smiling under all his losses. 'Tis well known, these times frown'd upon him, and made him a great looser, yet he had a most composed and contented heart under them, with a great deal of acquiescence in God. 5 Besides, no man knew the dimensions of his estate better then himselfe, so that knowing what I now doe know, I admire at his constant liberality.

He was of a meek spirit, wonderfull

derfull free from the tang of revenge; I know no man had such a rare art of forgiving injuries as he had: if any had spoke ill of him, or done ill to him, he would be silent, and passe it by with this, *They are but men, they shew themselves to be men.*

He was a pattern of patience under affliction; Surely there was much worth in this Gentleman, your faces speak such sadnesse for his losse and departure; Methinks I read a sad love, and loving sadnes written upon your faces for him.

It may be some may think, that in setting out his graces and his works, that I place some merit in these things: No, I do not, and therefore let me tell you, that when he was like to dye before, (for now God took him suddenly) he uttered this speech, when he saw his dear wife and servants weeping

weeping before him: *Why doe ye weep thus? cannot a man dye without all this adoe?* and ſaith he, *I doe rely wholly upon the righteouſneſſe of Jeſus Chriſt*; and recovering that time: he did renounce all his own works that ever he had done, deſiring to be accepted in Chriſt.

And thus I have done ſpeaking of him, and ſo ſpeaking longer to you: only I would entreat you to pray for his family; He hath been an inſtrument of good unto the countrey, and now he is gone, pray for his Family, pray good on his Family, that much good may ſtill come out of that Family.

And what ſhall we ſay of our ſelves, what ſhall I ſay to you? I ſay againe, as I did before, Loſe not your opportunities, ſhall we ſuffer the time to condemn us, that

that was given to ſave us? we muſt either be ſaved in it, or condemned in it: ah then! let us time our buſineſſe aright for heaven: you that have no grace, get it: I ſay, get it; you that have any grace, uſe it for God, and increaſe it: uſe your grace to Gods glory: act more grace: and get more grace. It is a ſad ſigne when men do not go on in grace; the righteouſneſſe of God (ſaith *Paul*) is revealed from faith to faith; That is, they which have faith, ſhall have more faith: therefore this is a fearfull ſigne that we have no faith nor grace, if God doth not increaſe our faith and grace in us.

Rom. 1. 17.

Againe, If men will ſleep and do no good, God comes and takes away their gifts: *Take his Talent from him* (ſaith Chriſt) *from the unprofitable ſervant*, in *Act.* 26. 18. You have God opening eyes, in

Iſa.

Iſa. 6. to you have God ſhutting eyes, in *Joh.* 15. 1. you have God dreſſing trees, in *Mat.* 3. 10. you have God hewing down trees, and in *Mat.* 21. there you have him curſing the tree, *Never fruit grow on thee hereafter*: if thou neglect prayer God will take away the gift of prayer; if you will not exerciſe repentance, God will take away repentance it ſelf from thee; thy graces ſhall drop away one after another, and any vertue dye after another, untill the Soul dye too. Thus doth God ſmite the unprofitable ſervant, that crnmbles away his time here, his opportunittes here, and acts not for God: *Take away from him, even that which he hath*, and then as the figtree began to wither, ſo do his gifts begin to flag & pair in him, as if a worm were ſtill knawing at them, his knowledge looſeth its trlliſh, like a dying mans pallate, his

Mat. 25. 28.

Verſe 29.

his judgement in him ruſts like a ſword that is not uſed, His faith withereth as if it were blaſted, & the Image of death is upon all his profeſſion, he thinks like *Sampſon*) to pray as he did, and ſpeak as he did, he ſhakes himſelfe to duty as at other times, but his ſtrength is gone from him. Wo to the ſoul of ſuch a one: Soul-loſſes, and Soul-Judgements are the worſt.

In one word, Sinners, wing your haſt, delay not, but home to God, your opportunities are flying, fly you as faſt home to God, let me argue the caſe with you as *Abraham* did with God, peradventure (ſaith he) there be 50 righteous in *Sodom*, peradventure, 20. peradventure but 10. and wilt thou not ſpare it for theſe? as *Abraham* reckoned up the righteous that might have bin in *Sodom*, ſo give me leave to number your days,

days, it may be thou haſt 20 years yet to live, and wilt thou not ſerve God 20 years for a Crown of glory? 20 years ſervice is too little for ſo great a Crown of glory, when thou com'ſt to dye, thou would'ſt be ſaved for ever, and wilt thou not ſerve out 20 years to be ſaved an eternity? It may be thou haſt but 10 years yet to live, and wilt thou not ſerve God 10 years, who haſt ſerved a luſt twice 10? It may be thou haſt but 7 years yet to live, an apprentiſe ſerves out 7 years for a trade, and wilt thou not ſerve 7 years for an heaven? *Jacob* ſerved twice 7 for *Rachel*, and wilt thou not ſerve one 7 for Chriſt? It may be there are but 5 cards in all left in the deck, but 5 years yet to live, nay, it may be but 5 months, nay, it may be but 5 weeks, nay it may be but 5 days, nay, it may be but 5 hours, as ſoon as you are come

home from burying the dead, you (it may be) may return your selves to be buried, ah then! Is it not time for you to make hast? you that have no grace, yet a little while, & you may loose heaven, (& is it not time then for you then to mak hast?) and you that have grace, yet a little while and you may arrive at heaven (and is it not time also for you to make hast?) up then & be doing: you Saints, I say, up & be doing, it may be your work is almost at an end; be not weary, pluck up your spirits; he which is tyred can crawl a little way; a little farther put on, a little farther yet, one step more for a Kingdom.

Lastly, I would charge every one of you that have heard me this day, not to gather from any thing I have said, that his opportunity is past: form up no such conclusion. I doe not, I dare not say to the vilest sinner, that his oppor-

opportunity is paſt: Though thine opportunity be paſſing away, yet I doe not ſay it is paſt away: this Sermon is not to ſhut any Sinner out of Heaven, but to haſten him towards heaven: becauſe you have loſt ſo many opoportunities, I would haſten you to come in to Chriſt, whilſt there are any yet left: becauſe opportunities may be loſt, I would quicken you to come in, before all are gone: Sinner, yet take Chriſt, and God will yet receive thee; repent now, and God will ſave thee now. Say not, thy opportunity is gone, for God cals thee, linger & delay no longer, becauſe opport u nity will be gone.

Deo Soli Gloria.

Books lately printed for Thomas Parkhurſt, *at the Sign of the three Crowns, over againſt the great Conduit, at the lower end of Cheapſide.*

A Learned Commentary, or Expoſition upon the firſt Chapter of the ſecond Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, by Dr. *Richard Sibbs*, publiſhed for publick good by *Thomas Manton*, Folio.

There is newly come forth Mr. *William Fenner*, his Continuation of Chriſts Alarm to drowſie Saints, with a Treatiſe of effectuall Calling, The Killing Power of the Law; The Spirituall watch, New birth, A Chriſtians ingrafting into Chriſt, A Treatiſe on the Sabbath, which were never before printed, bound in one Volume, *Fol.* and may be had, alone, of them that have his other Works, as well as bound with all his former works, which

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are now newly Printed in the ſame Volume with this.

The Journall, or Diary of a thankfull Chriſtian, wherein is contained Directions, for the right method of keeping and uſing, according to the Rules of Practiſe, a Day book of National and publick, perſonal and private paſſages of Gods providence, to help Chriſtians to thankfulneſſe, and experience, by *John Beadle*, Miniſter of the Goſpel at *Barnſton* in *Eſſex*, large 8o.

Mr. *Robinſons* Chriſtians Armor in large 8o.

Book of Emblems, with Latine and Engliſh verſes made upon (*Lights*) by *Robert Farly*, ſmall 8o.

Grace to the Humble, as preparation to the Sacrament in five Sermons by D. *John Preſton*.

Picturæ Louventes, or Pictures drawn forth into Characters, 12s.

A moſt Excellent Treatiſe containing the way to ſeek Heavens Glory, to flye Earths vanity, to fear Hells horror, with godly prayers, and the Bell-mans ſummons. 12.

Johnſons Eſſayes expreſſed in ſundry Exquiſite Fancies.

The

The one thing Necessary, by Mr. *Thomas Watson*, Minister of *Stephens Walbrook*, 8o.

Sion in the house of mourning, because of sin and Suffering, being an Exposition on the fifth Chapter of the *Lamentations*, by D. S. Pastor of *Uppingham*, in the County of *Rutland*.

Groans of the Spirit, or the Trial of the Truth of Prayer.

A Handkercher for Parents Wet eyes, upon the death of their children or friends.

The Dead Saint speaking to Saints and Sinners living, in several Treatises, *viz.* On 2 *Sam.* 24. 10. On *Cant.* 4. 9. On *John* 3. 15. On *John* 1. 50. On *Isa.* 58. 2. On *Exod.* 15. 11. Never published before. By *Samuel Bolton*, D. D. late Master of *Christs Colledge in Cambridge*.

Four profitable Treatises very usefull for Christian practice, *viz.* The Killing power of the Law. The Spiritual Watch; The New Birth of the Sabbath. By the Reverend *William Fenner*, late Minister of *Rotchford* in *Essex*.

Peoples Need of a living Pastor, at the Funeral of Mr. *John Frost*, M. A. by Mr. *Zach. Crofton*.

A Treatise

A Treatise against the Tolleration of all Religions. By Mr. *Thomas Edwards*.

Chatechizing Gods Ordinance, in sundry Sermons, by Mr. *Zachary Crofton*, Minister of *Buttolphs Aldgate*, *London*, the second Edition corrected and augmented.

A Coppy-book methodized and ingraven, by *Thomas Crosse*, wherein fair writing is expreſt, by which one may learn to write of himselfe, that can but read.

Mr. *Cottons* Exposition on the first Epistle of *John*, in *Folio*, the second Edition very much corrected.

The godly mans Ark, or City of Refuge, in the day of his distresse, discovered in Divers Sermons, the first which was preached at the Funeral of Mrs. *Elizabeth Moore*. Whereunto is annexed Mrs. *Elizabeth Moores* Evidences for heaven, composed and collected by her in the time of her health, for her comfort in the time of sickneſſe, By *Ed. Calamy*, B. D. and Pastor of the Church at *Aldermanbury*.

Enchiridion Judicum, or *Jehoshaphats* Charge to his Judges, opened in a Sermon before

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before the Right Honourable the Judges, and the Right Worshipfull, the Sheriffe of the County Pallatine of *Lancaster*.

Together with *Catastrophe Magnatum*, or King *Davids* Lamentation, at Prince *Abners* Incineration. In a Sermon meditated on the Fall, and preached at the Funeral of the Right Worshipful *John Atherton*, of *Atherton*, Esq; High Sheriffe of the County Palatine of *Lancaster*. By *John Livesey* Minister of the Gospel at *Atherton*.

There are going to the Presse some new pieces of Mr. *William Fenners*, late of *Rotchford in Essex*, never yet printed, preserved by a special Providence, one of which is a second part of his wilfull impenitency; being five Sermons more that he preached upon the 18. of *Ezekiel* and the 32. verse.

Now in the presse. A Thatre of flying Insects, wherein especially the manner of right ordering the Bee is excellently described with discourses Historicall, and Physicall, concerning them with a Second part of meditations, and observations Theological, and Moral, in 3 Centuries upon the same subject, by *Samuel Purchas*, M. A. in 4°.

FINIS.